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SHORT PIECES.

ENGLISH PREJUDICES.

When I was a child, through the whole of one winter—or it may be one summer, for that seems a more likely season for invasion—my nurse never put me to bed at night without telling me "the French were coming" before morning. Certainly my ideas were not very distinct as to what was meant by "the French coming;" but ideas I had, and they were full of horrors undefined and strange: something about great guns and martello towers—about running away from house and home, plums and playthings—literally running; for all the horses would be seized by the king to put soldiers upon. Then we were to burn bank-notes as useless, and carry off guineas, six-pences, and half-pence—of which last I made a

hoard for the purpose: and we must kill sheep and oxen for our own eating; all the butchers would be wanted to kill the French. Strange that ideas so vague and wild should make an impression so lasting!

To this first terror of my early years must, doubtless, be attributed the dislike I have constantly manifested to every thing French. Since I have reached maturity, and had occasion to express my sentiments, and since it has appeared that instead of the French coming to England, the English must go to France, my childish impressions have shown themselves in characters that never fail to bring on me the charge of "prejudice—English prejudice."—When I have remonstrated with a mother for taking the children whose home is to be England—who have been baptized to England's faith—whose husbands, whose children, are to be England's subjects—to bring them up in other tastes, in other habits, under the influences of another faith, that they may learn dislike to English society and English people, to every thing, good or bad, that is peculiar to their country—unfitting them for their own destiny, by changing the somewhat dull and tame solidity of the English character for a frivolous vivacity which they will find nothing

here to satisfy,—when I have asked if this be a parent's wisdom, I have been answered with "prejudice—English prejudice." And what can so strongly prove the force and permanency of early impressions, as the fact that I have retained these prejudices, not only against argument and persuasion, but against the testimony of facts, such as I am going to relate?

Ben Thompson—I knew him by that familiar name while yet a boy—was his mother's only son; and she was a widow. I remember him, with a green-baize bag under his arm, crying every Monday as he went to school; not for any dislike he had to learning, but because he must leave his mother. I remember him, a few years later, the most blameless member of an academy at Turnham Green, where he was hooted and pelted by his school-fellows for being home-sick, the only fault that ever was charged upon him. And later still, I remember him as he was, when, his education finished, he returned to his paternal roof, the inheritance of his family for many generations, to which he was the heir. He was one of those—would that England still had millions such!—who, from infancy to manhood, had never guessed there could be any thing better than his own

home—any happiness superior to what he found within its walls. It was not his mother only Ben had loved. He loved the paddock—something too proudly called the park—where first he trundled his hoop, or turned the hay with his first pitchfork. He loved the trees he had climbed to look into the forbidden bird's nest. He loved the church, where every Sunday, in the same corner of the same pew, through many a happy year, he had never been missed by a congregation who looked upon the old squire's son as the greatest man in it, next the parson. And he loved, tenderly loved, the aged nurse, and the still older hind, a sort of pensioners upon the estate; and many an honest tenant and laborer beside, who had drunk his health in strong ale at his christening, and taught their children to greet him with bows and courtesies whenever he came in their way —their future master, and, as they believed on trust, their benefactor. Benjamin had some hundred acres of good land; and if he had not much beside, there was enough for simple hospitality, such as had characterised his fathers; or, if he wished for more, there was enough to qualify and set him forward in any profession he might choose. I do not say that Ben was without ambition. I often heard of wrongs

that Ben had a mind to right, as soon as he was old enough to be a magistrate: except that it was five miles from home I should have fancied I saw his eyes glisten with desire to be mayor of the county town. That he ever dreamed of being member I can scarcely think; but Ben could speak good English, and loved a debate with the gardener on politics: and certain it is, his blue ribbon was always larger than any one's else at election-time. Ben was not born when the "French were coming;" if he had no doubt he would have stood the foremost champion of his country in some yeoman corps. His fine, fair hair, and sensible blue eyes, and sanguine colouring, would have shown well under a helmet.

Such was Benjamin Thompson when, wanting yet a year to be of age, I saw him at his mother's house; fond of his home, fond of his country, fond of study, and of every healthful exercise of mind and body, and grateful to heaven, as I have reason to think, for the possession of every thing it had then entered into his mind to desire: open and honest as the day; and, if he was a little warm in argument, it was only when any one disputed the rights of the crown, the rights of the church, or the rights of the people—or denied that the constitution of

England was the best in the world, its climate the finest in the world, its people the bravest in the world, and the county of D * * * the finest county in it, and H—— Park the best land in the county.

Two years after, Ben came to my apartments in London, a little browner and older, the same handsome countenance and awkward gait, but with something of an eager restless air: more gay, but not so satisfied as it used to be. To my inquiries of his business in London, he replied that he was going abroad—he intended to travel for some years. He had already been one year on the continent, and had returned with the intention of settling at H—— Park; but he found the country so dull and tame after what he had been accustomed to—the climate was so unhealthy he had never felt alive since he returned. He found there was nothing so improving as travel; nothing so much enlarged the mind, and cleared away prejudices, and wore off the rust of home. At present he had only seen enough of other countries to give him a desire for more; he intended to travel for some years before he settled himself to any pursuit. I asked him of his property. He replied that there was some difficulty: for want of a master's eye things were neglected, and the

proceeds were not forthcoming; but he had cut down the old trees to make up present deficiencies, and had let the land off for the future. I asked him of his mother: for a moment, Ben Thompson looked as he used to do; he looked grave—I almost thought he looked sad. He faltered, I am sure, before he answered, "That was the worst of it." His mother could not bear he should go abroad again. Her heart was almost broken when she heard that H—— Park was to be let. But what could he do? He could not drone away his best years in the society of a county town, and die of a fog. His mother was still healthy, and not very old; in a few years he should be tired of roving, and return to make her happy in her latter days. I wondered at this change; but the mystery was easily explained. Ben's mother had had advisers—as who has not?—they thought it was a pity such a handsome youth should not have a little more polish—should not see something of the world: he could never make any figure in life if he did not travel; he was too young at present to settle—much better send him abroad for a year, to acquire knowledge and enlarge his mind. Ben's mother believed; and in spite of his avowed disinclination, which all his friends declared to be the effect of prejudices which

ought to be got over, he was persuaded to depart. He went—no matter where; he saw—no matter what. Nature had given Ben what the phrenologists call a large organ of locality, easily awakened to the love of roving; he had taste and feeling capable of revelling in nature's magnificence, and he had good humor to please and be pleased with all he met. He increased his knowledge—he enlarged his mind—he retained no *prejudices.* Years have passed away since last I saw him; but Ben is not returned. The park-house is gone to decay—the lease of the land has been renewed—the squire's pew in the church remains empty—the widowed mother has no companion—the poor have no benefactor—England has lost one of her best supports. What Ben has gained I know not. Doubtless he has lost his *prejudices.*

It is not many weeks since I took leave of Helen Maxwell—that was her name when I parted from her; what it is now is of little consequence—for I shall probably never see her more. She was the eldest daughter of my earliest friend—loved by me, for her sake, with more than common tenderness, for she had been many years in her grave. Helen was on the verge of womanhood when her mother died—about sixteen, I think; and, as she gave her

parting blessing to this favorite child, she bade her look upon her younger sisters, then in infancy, as a charge from heaven, who would look to her for guidance, and, wanting a mother's hand, would form themselves on her example. And this they did; she was mother and sister too. The father looked upon her as his pride and hope, his other children being yet so young. Every advantage moderate circumstances could procure, was given to Helen in her education; but the greatest of all had been derived from the piety of her sainted mother, who, from her birth, had done all a mother could to bring up her child to God. And Helen seemed to answer to her cares. I thought her religious character as decided as could be manifested in one who had been little tried—who had seen nothing of the world—to whom pleasure had sent no invitations, and interest no bribes, to depart from the pious habits of her father's house; for Helen had never been out of it. The mother, when finishing her own course with joy, and ready to enter her eternal rest, looked gratefully and fearlessly upon this child; for she believed that the seed of truth and holiness had taken root in her bosom. She thanked heaven for this answer to her prayers, and died in peace. Every thing in

Helen's conduct seemed to give sanction to the mother's hope. She was lovely as the fresh flower of the morning before the eye of day has opened upon it; and, if a too quick susceptibility of impression from external things might be already perceived, it appeared but as a grace, yielding compliance to every one, and deriving pleasure from every thing. Allowed by her father to follow her own wishes, I never heard that Helen entered into any of those pursuits, or appeared in any of those places, her pious mother had taught her to avoid; neither that she discontinued the religious services and habits which are supposed to mark a mind determined in its choice of good or evil, of God or mammon.

The time came when Helen's principles were to be put to a more serious trial; this, too, they stood. I do not think she was more than nineteen when she received proposals of marriage from a gentleman, the son of her father's friend. He was, in every way, what is called a desirable match; there was no obstacle but that which existed in Helen's mind—or, I would rather say, in her conscience—for I believed she loved him as well as one could do, who was too young and too inexperienced to know whether she loved or not. At all events, to use

her own expression, "she could have loved" him; but, though of upright character, he had shown no interest in religion—no love to God —no detachment from the world and self. Helen knew what her mother would have wished; she thought she knew what heaven would approve; she said, "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" and she refused the match.

It was not more than a year after this, that, making my usual visit to Mr. Maxwell, I was informed by him that Helen had an invitation to pass six months in Paris with her aunt; and great as was the sacrifice to himself, and the loss to his other children, to whom Helen was every thing, he could not be so selfishly unjust as to refuse it. Besides the pleasure which every young mind must derive from scenes so new and interesting, great advantages were promised for the improvement of her talents; and though the dear girl had hesitated a little on account of depriving her sisters of her superintendence, she felt satisfied that they would ultimately benefit by her improvement. It was in vain I used the freedom of the mother's friend to attempt to dissuade him from his purpose; in vain I told of the unhealthful excitements—of pernicious examples—of a seducing faith.

"Prejudice—all English prejudice." He was sure of those to whom he committed her: good principle was equally safe every where, and he was sure of Helen's.

Helen Maxwell went to Paris. Three months more than the six had elapsed when I received a pressing note from her father to see him at his house. Knowing that Helen had been some time expected, I hoped it was on occasion of her arrival. The expression of the old man's countenance when I entered his apartment was intensely painful; a pencil might, but language cannot paint it. Tears, such as manhood does not often shed, stood upon his wrinkled cheek while he told me that Helen had indeed returned, but only to ask him to part from her for ever. At these words the little children ceased their play, and drew nearer to their father, as if to borrow the expression of his sadness. Helen was to be married. Helen had attached herself to one abroad who loved her, *so she said*, as Englishmen do not love. True, she must leave her country; but she had formed more friendships in nine months abroad than ever she had formed in all her life in England: she minded to leave nothing but her father—and all daughters, when they marry, leave their fathers. True, the man she loved was of a

different faith; but Helen had learned, now that she had seen more of life, that there are more ways than one of serving God—that small differences of opinion are of no consequence—that, if the heart be right, it matters not to what church a man belongs; since she had become familiar with the practices of the Romish Church she did not see so much objection to them. She hoped her lover was a pious man; or, if not, with the blessing of God upon her influence, she hoped he would become so, and they might walk together towards heaven, though by a different route. In short, Helen waited only her father's consent, which, she said, could be withheld only at the cost of her happiness, since her affections were fixed unchangeably. The father believed it and consented; but never from that day has sorrow departed from his countenance—never since has he named her without a tear. Of all she asked at parting, one thing only he refused. She asked to have her sisters, each in turn, to finish their education under her care; he answered, "No: never should another girl of his be sent into a foreign land." Helen Maxwell is married. She has left her father; she has left the family committed by her mother to her guidance; she has left the altar where that sainted

mother devoted her in prayer to God; perhaps, before this, she may have left her faith: doubtless she has left her *prejudices*.

I one day asked a young minister, who had recently been inducted to a living in the country, by what authority from his divine Master he gave up his parochial duties to another, and prepared to pass the summer months on the continent. He answered me that there was quite as much to do on the continent as in England. He did not intend to be idle, or to travel merely for his own gratification. He had prepared himself—pointing to a trunk already packed with Bibles, Tracts, Homilies, &c.—to pursue his ministerial work wherever he might go, in proclaiming the Gospel of peace, and distributing the word of life. I remarked that being an ordained minister of the English Church, and having taken upon himself the especial charge of a portion of her community, as their appointed minister, I did not perceive how he could have any ministerial duties to perform in a foreign land, plainly incompatible with the charge committed to him at home. He told me this was a mistake—a *prejudice*. The souls of men in one place were of as much value as in another; the ministry of God's servants was every where. It was convenient for

him to travel; and he did not feel that he could be better employed than in carrying the light of truth to the benighted continent. He should leave his parish in good hands, and, with God's blessing on his labors for others, return improved himself in knowledge of mankind—in experience of the ways of the kingdom of darkness, and the devices of the Evil One under a diversified character of iniquity. His experience would be gain to his parishioners, as well as to himself. Particularly, he desired to see and to contend with Popery in the focus of her abominations, that he might verify her deeds, and testify of her corruptions. I answered not again; for I felt it unavailing. Mr. Peters was a young man of fortune, of an honorable family, and considerable attainments. He had entered the church because he loved it, and devoted himself to the ministry of Christ, because he loved his service. His piety was beyond question, and his powers of usefulness above the common level. During the short period he had served his parish-church, the congregation had considerably increased; and so pleasing seemed the promise of his ministry, to those best able to appreciate it, that his intended absence was heard of with regret. I happened to visit that parish whilst Mr.

Peters was away, and could not but be struck with the great alteration in the appearance of the church. A pious but not very able man supplied the place of curate; and, with a tone peculiarly disconsolate and discouraged, went through the service to an empty church, of which the large green pew in the centre, appropriated to the clergyman's family, stood conspicuous in emptiness. Of the parishioners whom I inquired after, some had gone to one place of worship, some to another, and more had stayed at home; for the rector, as they told me, was away.

How long Mr. Peters stayed away I do not know—it was no business of mine; neither do I know where he went to, or what he did abroad. I met him after his return at a large dinner-party, succeeding some public meeting; and my attention was deeply rivetted to a conversation—almost, I may say, a controversy—maintained by my friend alone, against the prevalent feeling of the company, in extenuation of the errors and practices of the Romish Church. Of some things I heard him say they were mere ceremonies—very little important, when you come to witness what they are, apart from the coloring which distance and exaggeration give; of other things, that they were

not so essentially erroneous as he had supposed, before he had frequent opportunities of intercourse with the members of that church. There was more made, he thought, of the differences between their faith and ours than need be, if people would put aside their prejudices, and see things for themselves. Doubtless there were errors—many things to be lamented; but it was astonishing how intimacy reconciled those together who were used to set themselves in array against each other, and tended to beget liberality of sentiment, and brotherly affection. Be it not supposed my friend had this thread of argument to himself unbroken. His opponents were many; but to every charge they brought against the apostate church, he had something ameliorating to produce. For every exposure of her corruptions, he had an *if* or *but* of doubtfulness or explanation; even for the desecration of her Sabbaths he had a softer coloring—they kept them after their own manner—they understood the institution differently, and meant no dishonor when they devoted them to pleasure. He thought the frequent residence of our people abroad, would greatly tend to reduce the acrimony that was between the churches, and, by removing prejudices on both sides, bring them into more

Christian communion. I thought so too. I should have found reason to think it now, if I never had before. The reverend apologist was a gentle and benevolent spirit, too readily susceptible, perhaps, of the charms of social intercourse—too easily blinded to what is sinful before God by what is kind and acceptable to man: as the eye looks upon darkness till it sees it not dark, and the taste is accustomed to bitterness till it finds no disrelish in it, so this amiable and pious young man had looked upon error till it ceased to disgust him, and upon sin till it ceased to seem sinful. Mr. Peters might have carried light to the benighted—he might have distributed knowledge to the ignorant—this I know not; but I know, for I have had frequent communications with him since, that he has brought back diminished attachment to his own church—diminished jealousy for the honor of the divine word—diminished earnestness in maintaining the *peculiar* tenets of Protestanism: of course, he has brought back no *prejudices.*

Perhaps I may be thought too serious. One story more, and I have done. A lady came some years ago to my apartment, introduced by a friend, to consult me upon the state of her

worldly prospects, and be advised of the likeliest method to amend them. She was a remarkably plain little woman, upon the verge, as I guessed, of sixty: but with a good nature, and simplicity in her countenance that rendered it not unpleasing. She wore a close, untrimmed bonnet, which, for any look of fashion or newness that was upon it, might have been her grandmother's; the rest of her dress was remarkably plain and common, and something worn: her whole manner and appearance below that of polished life, though free from any thing that could rightly be called vulgarity. In the statement of her pretensions, she was very humble and modest. She had been engaged in tuition it seemed, and in some moderate and pious families had been considerably valued; but not being quite polished enough, or accomplished enough, or learned enough for this wonderful age, her plain trustworthiness had become depreciated in the market, and could with difficulty be disposed of at any price. In this dilemma she consulted me upon the advisability of going to Paris to improve herself. Of course she was unaware of my early prejudices. She must soon have perceived them when, with most anti-parisian plainness, I made mention of her years—of the little time that remained to

make provision for the flesh; that her difficulties, if increasing with age, must also be shortening—that the little property she had might better be applied to the diminished necessities of her diminished years, than expended in speculations upon future gains. In short—for I have never concealed my prejudices—I told her I had seen many injured by going to Paris, but few improved by it—that she would deprive herself of religious comforts and advantages, so necessary to her age and state of mind; and I doubted if what she would gain would be any recommendation to serious families on her return.

She thanked me, and left me, and I thought no more of her till, two years after, I was sitting in the same chair, in the same apartment—how some people stand still and let the world go by them!—when a lady was shown in! It was even Dorothy; but what a change! Never shall I forget the sight of her. Flaxen curls, of which each one was as large as a penny roll, were ranged in triple rows on either side her face; a smart silk hat, of many colours, was so obliquely placed as to shadow one half only. Her wizen face had acquired a coloring which I did not take to be the flush of youth. The rest was in keeping: bracelets, and chains, and

ruffles, and flounces, had swelled out her person to ample proportions with its height. Whilst I sat in blank amaze, "I am come," said Dorothy, with a fantastic and tripping tone, "to show you that I am not injured by going to Paris." I looked intently in her face—I am almost afraid I laughed; but Dorothy, nothing abashed by vulgar gaze, went on to assure me nothing could be so false as had been my prejudices. There was a great deal more spirituality among the religious people in France than in England. She had enjoyed much greater privileges in the society there than ever she had here. They were more united, more liberal, more separated from the world. Never had she felt so much of the Spirit's influence as in that delightful Paris. Poor Dorothy! I did not ask after her acquirements, her old bonnet, or her modesty: I supposed they had gone with her PREJUDICES.

THE LOVE OF THE WORLD.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD, NEITHER THE THINGS OF THE WORLD.—IF ANY MAN LOVE THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM.

ITS CHARACTER.

THE incompatibility of the love of the world with the love of God; of the course of the world's passions, pride, and interest, with the devotion of a Christian life, and the detachment required of the believer, has been always a subject of offence to the unbelieving; a spot upon God's children, more intolerable and more unreasonable to the natural mind, than any peculiarity in their doctrines. And though the renunciation of the world is the earliest vow made for the infant, on its admission to the church, renewed whenever he becomes a child of God

by adoption of the Spirit, it is too often that which the believer latest understands, and most reluctantly fulfils. Is it not that on which throughout, the mind of God and man are most openly at variance? In questions of morality, the conscience at least of man is with the law of God, however his maxims and fashions are at variance. But the unrighteous mammon of this fallen world is so consonant to the desires of its fallen inhabitant, he finds it hard to understand why he is called upon to renounce it. Those good things which, before sin entered, were good in every sense, cursed in our curse, seem equally well suited to our changed condition; and really are so: the Scripture in this sense calls them good:— "Thou in thy life-time hadst thy good things." It is only when the heart is regenerate, and man is called out of the world that lieth in wickedness, to be the servant of God, that the world's most valued possessions and most esteemed endowments, are no longer suited to his condition, and must not be his wages, and cannot be his service. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Surely there is a strange sort of covetousness clinging about the hearts of God's believing people, that they will have both masters, and take wages of them both,

and have the wealth and honor of this world added to the eternal riches of the next. "The glory which thou hast given me, have I given unto them." And they are still coveting the miserly gains of this unprofitable world!

"Be content with such things as ye have."* The things that we *have;* this may be very little: in another place we are told to be content with food and raiment, the barest necessaries. Observe, it is not said, "Such things as ye can get"—when ye have entered into competition for all those things that the nations of the world seek after, and schemed, and toiled, and speculated, be satisfied with the utmost you can gather in the universal scramble. I am afraid this would be a convenient reading to many of us, but it is not the word of revelation. Covetousness is here put in opposition to contentment: unsatisfied desire is not contented; the very desire of the heart, therefore, is to be repressed: and the conversation, all that talking and acting in the common intercourse of life, which betrays to the keen eye of unbelief, the undiminished avidity with which the followers of Jesus pursue the gains of earth, and aspire after its possessions. Is our conversation thus characterised, even among our-

* Heb. xiii. 5.

selves? When they that fear the Lord speak one to another, does he hearken to no covetous, no ambitious, no aspiring words? I think I have seen a Christian company, surprised at a profession of indifference to wealth, a doubt expressed of its desirableness to the child of God. I do not think I ever saw any company surprised at the expression of a desire for more, or the intimation that what we have is not enough for our contentment. So adverse to the declared mind of God is the established estimate of things, and so hard the language of the world to be unlearned, even by those, who profess to have separated themselves from it.

The prophet Ezekiel has an awful passage. It was spoken of the typical Israel first, but may it have no antitype in the Church of Christ? "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."* Remark the Gospel parallel—"He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the cares of his world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke

* Ezekiel, xxxiii, 31.

the word, and he becometh unfruitful." The holy seer might well have fixed his inspired vision on our country in the present moment, when he received that message from the Lord. The sweet sounds of melody seem scarcely more attractive now to the ear of taste, than the pleasant voice of the preacher of righteousness. The great, the rich, the learned and the busy, now throng the churches that used to be abandoned to the poor and the unemployed. They profess to like, and seem to feel the truth; the more faithful the minister, the more popular he becomes; and the more forcibly his words condemn the world, the more sure he is to gain its favorable hearing. "They come," "they sit," they come again: what distinguishes them from the people from whom they would heretofore have parted at the gate, ashamed to be numbered among the hearers of the Gospel? He whose omniscient eye never fails to see where his own good seed is falling, has marked the distinction, and he has called it covetousness. "They hear, but will not do; for their hearts are gone after their covetousness." "When they have heard, they go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life," choked, not with the sordid accumulation only of ill-gotten wealth,

but with the care of increasing it, and the pride of possessing it, and the pleasures to be derived from its expenditure.

"From the least unto the greatest, every one is given to covetousness," saith the prophet Jeremiah twice, in the name of the Lord. The love of this world's good is not confined to the rich; to them who having already large possessions, might be supposed to have enough: of whom we are sufficiently quick to wonder that they are not satisfied, though it would be very difficult to define the point at which they should be so. Nay, there is no such point. If man may covet at all, he may covet on; for no portion of this world's good, nor all of it, will be enough for the immortal spirit. Can space be filled with less than its own dimensions? Can the soul's appetite be stayed by feeding upon air, that it should not greedily cry out for more? To be satisfied *with* the possessions of this life, is a scheme of man's devising, and no wonder he has not been able to discover how much of it will do. It is God's way that he be satisfied *without* them. "Such things as ye have." "Filled with all the fulness of God." So full, the world must lay its treasures at the gate; within the heart there will be found no place for them. This can be, and it should be.

When God requires of his people to renounce the world, refuse its wages, and counts its gold for dross, he does not mean to consign his family to penury, and leave them the low and destitute of the earth. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." "Wine and milk, without money and without price." "Or things present, or things to come, all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." This, and nothing less than this, God considers to be enough for them that love him. It is they who should be pulling down barns, and building greater, for the wealth is only limited by their capacity to receive it: but instead of this enlargement of the heart towards God, to make more room for the riches of his grace, poor Christians waste the little compass of their affections upon the chaff of earth, and wonder that their spirits grow so lean, and their souls remain so hungry, upon the promise of so much abundance. Methinks that "certain rich man" was wiser than some of us. We have goods laid up for all eternity, with the immutable word for our security; but our souls must take no ease. To-day we want more, for to-morrow

we must have an increase, the next day more to that. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light:" these last are rich enough, and do not think so. Those cannot have enough, and feel they have not, though they know not why. Each one wonders that the man who has more than he has, is not satisfied, until he gets the same, and proves it insufficient, and then it is the next, and the next step that will do; but it never does. Thus it is said to be the *covetous* rather than the *rich*, that the world blesseth, or accounts blessed; they whose hope of being satisfied is kept alive by the perpetual accumulation of their store, a perpetual filling up of the ever-growing void.

Men talk of motives for the desire of wealth, or they make distinctions between one sort of earthliness and another. The love of money is very mean, but wealth leads to power, and the love of power is noble. Avarice is contemptible, the world agrees to that; but our station in life, our consequence in society, our independence among men, all these require money, and these are generous aims, which the world's judgment never calls in question. Our Lord makes no such reservations or distinctions. "Thou shalt not covet." "Seekest thou great things for thy-

self? Seek them not." "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." "Sit thou down on the lowest seat." "I am among you as he that serveth." "The servant is not greater than his Lord." "The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee; thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high."* "Though thou shouldst make thy nest higher than the eagle's, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord."† But we trench upon our second consideration, the *sinfulness* of all covetous desires of the flesh.

ITS SINFULNESS.

The principle of sin, as I conceive, is not opposition to the *law* of God; if by that we understand his revealed will, but opposition to his *character*, which is the immutable rule of right and wrong. Sin would be sin, though the law had not been given, and God had made no discovery of his will. But the development of sin into transgression, is by opposition to the law, or will of God in any wise made known. "I had not known sin but by the law." I do not understand the apostle to

* Obadiah, iii, 4. † Jeremiah, xlix, 16.

mean that he had not had sin, but that he had not perceived it to be so. Lust was in his heart, and lust was sin, before the Lord said, "Thou shalt not covet." But by the law is the *knowledge* of sin. It was in Paul *dead*, as he expresses it, giving to himself no sign of its existence; but when the law came, it revived, it manifested itself in opposition to it, and grew into actual transgression. Such I understand to be the meaning of the passage; and I notice it here, because to the obdurate heart of man the law of God seems an arbitrary thing, making evil what would otherwise have been harmless, and attaching to it suffering that need not have ensued; thus resolving all sin into disobedience, and its punishment into an arbitrary exercise of power. If it were so, it would become the creature to put his hand upon his mouth, and say, 'Even so, Lord, since so it seemeth good to thee. If ambition were a harmless thing, and the Maker of all things had forbidden it, it would be our duty and our wisdom to abstain. But it is not so. Let those who go on in earthliness, because they deny the divine authority of Scripture, who bury themselves and all their faculties in earth, and lose their souls in sense, because they reject the revelation that requires them to

do otherwise, let them be assured this will not change the case. Earthliness is sin, and sin is misery, whether you receive the word of God or not. Your unbelief will add another sin, but will not change the character of this, nor exempt you from its consequences. If this warning should seem misplaced, as being applicable only to the avowed sceptic, consider a little. There are more unbelievers than those who say the Bible is a fiction. There are those who say, "I see no harm in such things, and *therefore* it is not my duty to forego them." "I make no profession, and *therefore* it is not incumbent on me to renounce the world." "Certainly with *your views*, you cannot desire wealth, or struggle for aggrandisement, but I do not think there is any sin in these pursuits." Do not see—do not think! "Anoint your eyes with eye-salve that ye may see," for as sure as you are mistaken, with the testimony of God before you, your ignorance and unbelief will no otherwise change the case, than as they will be added to your other sins. Go to any earthly tribunal with this argument, and when you are called upon to answer for some transgression of the laws, say to your judges, "I have indeed heard of such law, but I saw no reason for it: I could not perceive any harm in

what is prohibited, and therefore did not believe the penalty was intended." Would you expect to be acquitted on such a plea?

We do not undertake to show the reasoners of this world the sinfulness of this or any other sin: it is what the unregenerate spirit never sees, or can see. But we say to them, you admit the Bible to be the word of God; in it all covetous desires are forbidden, and declared to be abhorrent to the Lord. What God forbids is sin. This is incontrovertible, because it involves an act of disobedience to the supreme authority, which is itself a sin, whether or not we can perceive the sinfulness of the thing forbidden. So much as this cannot be denied by any one who admits the truth of revelation. But our most gracious Father does not thus govern his believing people: it is not thus his holy word is read with the light of redeeming love upon it. "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." God has not laid on us onerous commands of which it is impossible for us to perceive the moral fitness, or proscribed any thing as sin, of which his grace will not enable us to feel the sinfulness. It was

not with ignorant submission David read, when he exclaimed, "Lord, how I love thy law:" nor Solomon, when he saw that the paths of heavenly wisdom, were ways of pleasantness and peace. Our gracious God invites us through all his word, to understand and know the beauty of holiness and the misery of sin. It is a lesson slowly learned indeed, and never learned at all by unassisted nature, in whose perverted vision holiness has no beauty, that we should desire it, and sin has no deformity that we should loath it. I am afraid it is a lesson, in respect of which we, as professing Christians, are very, very guilty. I am not sure if there is not in our slowness to it some coloring of that self-righteous principle so deeply rooted in our nature; better pleased to make a sacrifice to duty, than to accept the duty as a privilege; more gratified to give up our own will to God, than to have it brought into conformity with his. To forego our pleasure is doing something, to have it changed by grace is doing nothing. The former is the service with which a Christian course most commonly begins, but I do not think we should be content to rest there. There will be no sacrifice of our will in heaven, where our perfect happiness will be perfect conformity to the mind of God. I do

not say this can be attained on earth, for then would much of the requirement of the Gospel become void, and many Christian graces cease; but surely we are to go on unto perfection: to labor to be conformed to the likeness of our blessed Lord, not in his obedience only, but in the judgment of his mind, and the feelings of his heart. Is he not made unto us wisdom and sanctification, as well as righteousness and redemption?

I say, then, that in reference to the subject before us, Christians do not sufficiently consider the sinfulness of this sin, nor the wisdom of God in forbidding to us all carnal and covetous desires. Instead of accepting as a privilege their dismissal from the world's contentions, and independence of its brief possessions, they feel it a sacrifice almost too much to ask: they believe that temporal things are not to be desired; but they do not feel that they are not desirable, or find any other sin in the pursuit, than that of disobedience to a known command. Would that any argument of ours might, by the Spirit's help, throw light upon this truth, and show to the family of God the exceeding sinfulness of this sin, in the total want of conformity to the mind of God, and the example of Jesus Christ.

Is there no connection in our Lord's discourse, when, from the warning to his disciples against covetousness and all anxious occupation with the things of this life, as men prepared for change, he passes to the mention of his own bitter portion, the baptism he had to be baptised with, and thence exclaims, "Suppose ye that I am come to send peace on earth?"* May we not think that in thus continuing his discourse, he meant to convince his disciples of the unreasonableness of the desires he had forbidden, and the unsuitableness to them of what the nations of the world seek after? The world in which he had only lived to suffer, could be to them no object worth a care: the places where he was the despised of all, the servant of servants, and a thing of nought, could never be the sphere of their greatness and their pride. And when he indignantly exclaimed—"Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth, but how is it that ye do not discern the time"—did he not intimate that the time in which the world was left to the contention of the wicked one, while he withdrew to receive the kingdom from his Father, was not the time for his servants to make peace with it, to covet its treasures, and accept of its

* Luke, xii.

rewards. Whether or not there is such a meaning in the passage, it conveys to his followers a most deserved reproach; and I think no small measure of the sinfulness of earthly ambition, is the tacit disavowal of our absent Lord, in the desire manifested to take office, as it were, under the government of his enemies. This is accounted base in human politics: the subject who in his sovereign's absence takes wealth and honors from a rebellious people, and a usurping government, is held dishonored when his king returns, and must abide his vengeance, or sue out a pardon. At present the kingdoms of this world are not the kingdoms of our Lord: how can its power and possessions be the portion of his people? "It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord."* Jesus bequeathed nothing of this world to his church except its hatred. He did not say to his disciples when he left them, All this is mine, go in, and take possession in my name. I make you my vicegerents in my absence. Get wealth, that you may spend it in my service; get power, that you may execute my laws; and honors, for the glory of my name. His language was, "Behold, I send you as sheep among wolves." "Take neither scrip nor staff."

* John xv.

"Remember the thing that I said unto you; the servant is not greater than his lord." "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Lowly Master! methinks there should be some codicil to thy last will and testament, to give thy people a right to what they so much covet. When the prince of this world offered it all to thee, he knew it was thine, but would have tempted thee to take possession before thy time was come. He brings the same temptation to thy people, and, alas! they take the bait. He persuades them that the times are changed since thou wert here, and that they may venture now to take possession. A christianized world should be possessed and ruled by a believing people: thy separated ones must contend for rights, and accumulate property, and assist in legislation. I know not who has brought this message down, if it be not indeed the Father of lies; for still the written word remains the same, "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight." "Strangers and pilgrims upon earth." "Not mindful of that country from whence they came out." "Crucified to the world;" "buried with him." And the prayer remains the same, with which Jesus committed all that should believe in him to his Father's keeping, until he should return and take them

to himself. Often as the believing soul has been satisfied to fulness, in the reading of that prayer, there was never found in it a request or a promise of any thing in this life, but a participation of his own portion in it,—a share in his holy separation from it. Jesus did not ask that his disciples might have the world, nor that the world might be made fit for them to have. "They are not of the world." "Keep them from the evil of it." Is it no sin, is it possible that it should be thought and felt no shame to covet what our Master never gave or promised to his servants, and would not ask for them of his Father when he left them?

The love of earth is as contrary to our own prayers, as it is to our Lord's; in this again is its sinfulness apparent. We do not, we dare not pray for riches. "Day by day our daily bread." "Make all your requests known unto God." "Ask whatsoever ye will." "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." I am sure that no one has gone before the throne where Jesus intercedes, to say, Give me the wealth of this world for the sake of Him, who for my sake became poor, that I through his poverty might be rich. If ever that blessed Saviour has beheld, under covert of some other word, that base desire hidden, he must have puri-

fied the petition with his blood, and perfumed it with the incense of his merits, before he could present it to the Father. Indirectly, we pray continually against it. We pray against temptation—and the Scripture says: "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare." We pray against sorrow, and the Scripture says, "which some having coveted after, have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." We pray against sin, and it is written, "The love of money is the root of all evil." Taking the whole word of God in view, I believe that every Christian, every day of his existence, does virtually pray that he may *not* be rich; and thus do the covetous desires of his heart add the sin of dishonesty to that of disobedience, and the covetous labors of his hands deny his own petitions.

And oh! there is a sinfulness in this sin but little thought of; it is a despising of the mark which our Lord has set upon his people here, that the world may know that he has chosen them, and the Father may be glorified in them. It is an attempt to wipe out the spot of his children, and put on the livery of the God of this world. *He* clothes his servants in scarlet and fine linen; he loads their tables and gilds their roofs, and bribes them and besots them

with these things, "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life." And because he does so, God has chosen to make the absence and contempt of all these things, to be the peculiar characteristic of his people. The terms rich and poor are made use of in Scripture continually to designate those whom God accepts, and those whom he disowns; not that his grace is measured by degrees of wealth, but because he means to put dishonor upon all that man makes boast of, and set a mark upon his people that Satan cannot counterfeit nor the world mistake. He chose the poor of this world, not because they were poor—we must not erect poverty into a merit; but he chose them to poverty, and left them to poverty, and gave to poverty his richest blessings; because renunciation of what the world esteems, and happiness independent of it, exhibits the most striking contrast to all that can be seen in Satan's kingdom, and makes the most decided visible separation between the followers of Jesus and the children of the wicked one. Faith, hope, and love, the inward graces of the Christian, are things that God beholds, and the Spirit of God bears testimony of within us; they are the signs by which Christ knows his servants, and his servants know themselves. But they are not

visible to them that are without; the world does not understand and will not believe, and turns to ridicule this testimony of the Spirit within the soul. The outward and visible sign of a regenerate spirit, which God has set upon his people in the sight of all men, and no one can refuse to see when it is there, is this very renunciation of the pomps, and pleasures, and pursuits of earth; this detachment of the heart from perishable things, and devotion of it, with all its feelings, and powers, and affections, to a higher object. It follows, as might be expected, that this is the mark the world takes most offence at, and Satan hates the most; because they cannot refuse to see it, and cannot counterfeit it, and cannot ascribe it to a false assumption. It should be the mark the Christian loves the best, because it is that which gives most glory to the Father upon earth; the one he watches over with most zealous care, lest it become obscured, and the world perceive not that Christ has chosen us out of it. What shall we say, if it is that which oftenest is not to be found? I may not say that indifference to all that "the nations seek after" should be a Christian's *pride*—it is an evil word, never used in a good sense in the Scripture, though man affects to give it one;

but it is the Christian's dignity, his real greatness, his badge of honor, the one that Jesus wore himself; and when he took it off to put on eternal glory in its stead, he hung it about the necks of his disciples, and of all that should believe on him through their word.

The love of the world is an open breach of our Baptismal vow. And to this I would call the attention of those to whom we spoke before —who excuse themselves in the pursuit of wealth and pleasure on the ground that they make no profession of renouncing the world and do not think it necessary. But you *have* made a profession: if ever you have entered by baptism into the Christian church you have renounced it, by vows solemnly taken before God in the presence of his ministers. Men count the breach of promises a degrading sin. Thou Holy God! who keeps his word with Thee, or feels himself dishonored when he breaks it? Every Christian breaks it when his heart goes after its covetousness, and men justify him in it when they give honor to his gains; and the covenant which the creature makes with his Creator, the redeemed with his divine Redeemer, is the only one that can be broken without dishonor. The parent who makes his family an excuse for the accumula-

tion of property and pursuit of gain, stands as it were twice perjured; for he made the same covenant for his children as he made for himself, and breaks it by every ambitious wish on their behalf. The thought makes us tremble for the sins of England, of our money-getting, money loving people. Never was there so much eagerness, so much restless, sleepless, peaceless desire to increase the inheritance of our children, and place our families in a higher condition than their fathers. We speak proudly of our success, the nations have looked with admiration on our efforts; but success brings no relaxation, possession never has enough. It is, I believe, an axiom in politics that the only prosperous people are those whose wealth is perpetually increasing: perfectly true on earthly principles: but no one hears the warning voice of revelation, "Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down, deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword, from men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, who have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure; they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes."* Blessed of God, the only

*Psalm xvii, 14.

blessed of this prosperous people, is he in whose heart is heard the quick response, "But as for me I will behold thy face in righteousness—I shall be satisfied when I awake after thy likeness"—the likeness of God in Jesus Christ, who chose lowliness and poverty for himself, and chose it for his children and his friends, and pronounced on riches many times a curse, but never once a blessing.

Worldliness comprehends the sin of unbelief. It must be so; because if the word of God were fully taken as to the value of this world's good, the vanity of its possessions, and the danger of setting our affections on them, no one would covet such an evil thing. But we do not believe it. We deny it in every thought, and word, and deed. Let the professing Christian watch his words when he sits in company, his thoughts when he walks by the way, the direction of his cares and the yearnings of his heart, and certify himself whether he really believes what God has said of the unrighteous mammon, that riches are a snare, and the desire of them idolatry. And if he tries, as he will, to misinterpret the word of God, and say it is the unjust acquisition or pernicious use alone of wealth that is condemned, is not this the very trick of unbelief, to accept the word, while

we deny the sense: as if he who made a revelation of his will to man, did not use the words that would convey his meaning, disguising in ambiguous terms the very will he determined to reveal. Is it so written? Are not dishonesty, oppression, and sinful indulgences, condemned separately and distinctly from covetous desires, the parents too often of that guilty progeny?

Above all, worldliness is idolatry.* It is so written in Holy Scripture.† As if the Spirit foresaw that men would doubt its guiltiness, and wonder to see it ranked among the grossest crimes; that Christians who shrink with horror from those other sins, would feel no shame in the pursuit of this, an explanation is twice affixed, to leave us without excuse—"which is idolatry"—the greatest of crimes, the breach of the first and great commandment, the most fearful of condemnations, on which the judgments of God have been most terrible from the beginning. Had the word of God spoken less plainly to this fact, the judgment of man would never have assented to it, and still in his heart he disputes against it, and in his thoughts denies it. We think we can accumulate wealth without loving it; make gain our object without

* Ephes. v. 5. † Col. iii. 5.

setting our hearts upon it; carve the idol upon our walls, our tables, our equipage, and all around us, without falling down to worship it; but God has said we cannot, for where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." How fearfully have many tried to disprove this divine position, by giving God their hearts without renouncing the covetous desires of the flesh; and thus "have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." He who will have more gods than one, is as much an idolater as he who denies the only true One.

ITS DANGERS.

If the love of earth be sinful in itself, how many are the sins to which the pursuit of it indirectly leads. But these can scarcely be separated from its dangers; they are those "many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."* It seems

* Tim. vi, 9.

superfluous to say more of danger, when God has said, "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." This word should be enough. But the danger does not lie hidden under God's sovereign will. It is made manifest by the light of grace to every single eye: it may be felt in every honest heart wherein the Spirit dwells: it is discovered, like the barren quicksands of the deep, by the miserable wrecks that have been made upon it. Esau sold his birth right for a mess of pottage. Balaam the son of Bosor loved the wages of unrighteousness. Hezekiah showed them all the treasures of his house. Thirty pieces of silver were the price of Him that was valued. Ananias and Sapphira brought a certain part. "Demas has forsaken us, having loved the present world." It is not the much or the little that constitutes the temptation. Satan knows the price of them that he will buy, and will not betray himself by too prodigal an offer. It is not the extent of our desires that constitutes their danger, nor is it necessarily their development in transgression. Hezekiah's sin was no more than a vain display of the wealth he had. In Esau the merest trifle made him put contempt on the promises of God. It is fearful ground to stand upon;

the moment a covetous desire enters, transgression is at the door; the first step taken for the love of earth is in a path that has no waymarks—we take it at a venture. A fearful progress is exhibited by the Apostle Peter, of them who having a heart exercised with covetous practices, "had forsaken the right way, and gone astray, following the way of Balaam."* The mist of darkness for ever was the issue: the progress was emptiness and peacelessness; swelling words of vanity and guilty pleasures; corruption to others and bondage to themselves; entanglements in the pollutions of the world from which they had been called out, and a latter end that was worse than their beginning. How much worse let every professed Christian think. We *know* the way of righteousness; with the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have learned the corruption of the world; perhaps for a time our eyes have been turned from its pursuits and allowed to look upon the riches of divine love. These *were* on the right way, since they are said to have forsaken it; their path was right, their knowledge was right—but alas, their hearts were wrong, they were gone after their cove-

* 2 Peter, ii, 14.

tousness. The Israelites were on the road to Canaan, but their hearts returned to Egypt. They ate of the spiritual meat, but they lusted after evil things. "Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them: as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."* Here it is the enjoyment of wealth, not its accumulation, that is idolatry. It takes the heart from God, or shares it with him, or satisfies it in his absence, or makes it unconscious of his presence; thence the possession of wealth, and the gratifications it procures, become a danger in themselves, which no wise man would covet. The fact is so in every case, even though the wealth should have come to us uncoveted, and be unblameably possessed. It is still a weight to carry, under which, though God himself has laid it on us, we shall need a greater measure of his grace. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven;" hardly, even when the power of God has made it possible, and his grace has made it sure. The possessions of this world apart from its pursuits, are a snare, a legion of snares, which he who wishes to encounter, is little conscious of his own weakness. They

* 1 Cor, x. 7.

are an incumbrance; and he that carries most will not run lightest on the course, or come the foremost in: so great is the difficulty of using them rightly, and wearing them loosely, and withholding from Satan's influence what he claims as especially his own. To them on whom God lays the difficulties of exalted wealth and station, He gives grace sufficient for their need. But he has not promised it to those who choose them for themselves, and eagerly and successfully pursue them, in spite of all the warning that has been given, and the assurance of his word that they are not desirable. Among other dangers, therefore, there is danger of his grace withheld, and without it who shall stand? "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things;" and most of all things in that which will impede his course. "Choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life." "What shall I eat and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" How shall I increase my stores, and where shall I deposit them, and how shall I make use of them, and how shall I secure them? Happy, if "How shall I quit them?" be not the least careful thought.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please

him that hath chosen him to be a soldier."* The wealth and splendor of an eastern camp were not more dangerous to its effeminate and voluptuous warriors, than are the riches of the world to the soldiers of Jesus Christ. Do they not know this—do our Christian brethren indeed not know, how often the thoughts of what they have to lose, of what they have to enjoy, has made them to turn their backs in the day of battle—to connive at some ungodly practice, to compromise some truth, to hide their colors, or be basely vanquished? There is one at least who knows it—Satan knows who has houses and lands to care for, oxen to prove, and ground to go and see—he knows who it is that says, "I have no time to read—I want leisure to serve—I want composure to pray—I have so much business—I have so much company—society expects so much of me—my station, my character, my connections, there is so much to be considered—"Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house."† The Father, too, knew this, when, having made a great Supper for his Son, he was obliged to send to the highways and hedges for his guests—to them that

* 2 Tim. ii, 4. † Luke, ix, 61.

had nothing to leave and nothing to enjoy, the poor, the afflicted, and the suffering, because the prosperous were too busy. The Son of Man beheld it in the buried secrecy of the heart, and meant to make it manifest, when he said to one who offered himself to be his follower whithersoever he should go, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

The occupation, incident on the possession, and still more on the pursuit of earth, is a great hindrance to spiritual life. Man's time is so short, and his powers are so limited, that whatever is devoted to one pursuit is withdrawn from another—he can no more think of two things at once, or feel two things at once, than he can do them; perhaps ignorance or inconsideration of this fact exposes the Christian to more danger than he is aware of; while he is caring for the body, the care for the soul is suspended—while he is employed in laying up treasures upon earth, he is not increasing his store of spiritual riches or spiritual graces—"Redeeming the time," "while it is called to day," so short, so uncertain, and "the night cometh in which no man can work," "because the days are evil,"—while every thing is against us, and every thing without tends to counteract

the work of grace within, and draw us back or keep us back from following after righteousness, how find we so much time, and thought, and care for other things? The consequence is what might be expected. Christians do not grow in grace, they do no longer shine as lights in the world, the salt has lost its savor, the city once set upon a hill has ceased to be discernible from afar; in these days men inquire which is it, and scarce any one can tell another where to find it. The reason is, the world has grown too busy; the Church itself has grown too busy. One to his farm, and another to his merchandise, and another to his politics—and all of them together in the pursuit of earth. There is no leisure for that near communion with God on which saints were used to grow, for that study of the divine mind which might catch something of its impress, and reflect something of the light of Jesus by continual contemplation and close following of his footsteps. We know that it is so. We see that the lamp of the sanctuary burns dim, and there are not a few who fear that it is about to be removed. Is there not a cause? Do not Christians spend in the pursuit of earth, the time that should be spent with God? It is useless to confound the things that differ, and

say, as it is said, "We must attend to our business—we must pursue our lawful occupations—we must earn our bread, and provide for our own, and fulfil the duties of our condition, and do diligently what God has given us to do—we cannot withdraw ourselves from the common occupations and interests of life, to be devoted wholly to spiritual things—we desire more time for these, but we must live." Would that men were honest! "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." He has not required the one thing, nor forbidden the other; but he *has* said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." If the poor man would be contented with his daily bread; if the frugal would think his present gains enough, and the opulent be contented with half his profits, none would want leisure for the service of God, or the culture of the soul. What God has given us to do will hinder no man's growth in grace; it is the pursuit of that which He has forbidden. Satan can lay snares upon a lawful path, and hide them under cover of God's providence. He tells the poor of the pleasures of independence, and of something laid up against another day. He says to the striving, work a little harder and you may

increase your business. To the wealthy accumulator, Go on a little longer, you can retire and enjoy your leisure by and by. It is that wily tempter's favorite scheme, to make men spend the greater part of life in selfish accumulations, under the name of industry, and the small remainder, in self-indulgent idleness, under the name of rest.

St. Peter says of them who loved the wages of unrighteousness, that "they allure, through the lusts of the flesh, them that were escaped from error." St. Paul, having spoken of pride, of envy, strife and railings, subjoins, with a correcting word, "*But* godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." St. James deprecates the admiration of wealth, by the vices that so frequently attend it. "Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats? do they not blaspheme that holy name by which ye are called?" And is it not a fact ostensible to all, that much of the injury man inflicts on man, and much of the wrong we suffer, and the sins we excite as well as commit, the strife, the envy, oppressions, emulations, and contentions, by which every house is troubled, have their origin in this sin—struggling to be

the richest and the greatest; to excel each other in that which is highly esteemed among men, but by reason of its sinfulness is an abomination in the sight of God? "From whence come wars and fightings among you; —come they not hence, even of your lusts?" Who will boast that he can covet earth, without feeling or provoking envy; pursue it without a temptation to injustice or oppression; possess it without pride, or lose it without repining, or spend it without provoking or alluring any one to sin? St. Paul had all these dangers in his mind when he charged the followers of Jesus not to keep company with the covetous: if any one who was called a brother were covetous, "with such a one, no not to eat."* He is too dangerous a companion for men so prone to sin, so easily drawn aside from the ways of peace and truth, or hindered in their progress. And by far the most so, if he be called a brother, if he professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ, while the covetous desires of the flesh have possession of his heart. The fortunes amassed by successful speculation and excessive trading, have seduced thousands to their ruin, in Scripture words, to perdition and

* 1 Cor. v, 11.

destruction. It is the gamester's success, and I doubt not that it has in it the gamester's curse, the ruin of others whom it has induced to play the same venturous game. But while the lesser game of chance is played with guarded doors and windows barred to hide the guilty work, because men call it vice; this greater one goes on before the face of day, the world shouts victory to the winner, and the mind of God is not consulted. By the immutable holiness which is not to be mocked with names of man's devising, be we assured there is *one* parental eye, that looks as easily through the disguises of the mart as through the walls of the gaming-house, and sees his children in as much danger in the one place as the other. How long will they be deaf to his entreaties? "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." "Touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish in the using." The very companionship of the worldly man is dangerous; his success excites us to ambition, his elevation awakes our envy, his countenance gratifies our pride, his luxury lures our senses, his idols win our hearts. Nebuchadnezzar-like, he sets up his golden image in the way, and what time they hear the sound of the music, all the people fall down and

worship it. Is it all now, as it was once, *except* the servants of the living God?

And if the mere companionship of this sin be a danger from which the brethren of Jesus are exhorted to withdraw, lest they be either injured by it themselves or occasion injury to others, by seeming to give it countenance—if so dangerous be the contact of this sin, what must its indwelling be to the soul of the believer, to his safety in this perilous world, to his sanctity in this wicked generation, to the Spirit of God that dwelleth in him, to the image of Christ who has redeemed him, to the glory of the Father who has chosen him? "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." "Ephraim shall return to Egypt."* Christians, hear it; God may let you take your way. He may let the god of this world double and treble his wages, since you so much covet them, to bring you back into the bondage from which you have escaped. Since you will not take his word, nor hearken to his dissuasion, He may let you have the thing your hearts are set upon:—grow rich, grow great, fortune shall pour her gold into your lap, nothing shall cross you, none shall interrupt you, not a whisper of

* Hosea, ix, 3.

conscience shall break the silence, nor a movement of the Spirit interrupt your quiet. This is the most fearful thought of all. Successful competitors for the mammon of unrighteousness, are you sure it is God's *blessing* that makes your business to prosper, and your ground to bring forth plentifully, and your speculations all to turn out well? "Ephraim said, yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance. In all my labors, they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin."* My industry has gotten me this wealth, I have robbed no man. But the fowler is snared in his own net: the proud are taken in their own craftiness. You would have the temptations of wealth, you coveted its dangers, you have spread snares on your own path and gins for your own feet. Satan is on the watch, the world knows its time. "God hath left him: Take him, for there is none to deliver him."† "They shall return into Egypt."

Covetousness and idolatry were the prevailing sins of the natural Israel. "With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: by thy great wisdom and

* Hosea, xii, 8. † Ibid. viii, 13.

thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches."* We need not dwell upon the length of their abandonment, or how they have profaned God's holy name among the nations whither he has sent them. Need we tell the believer of long seasons of desertion and defection? of withering doubts, and cold despondency, of heartless prayers and vacillating faith, shameless denials and disgraceful compromise? Need we paint the darkness of the soul's abandonment, or the desolation of returning light; time spent, life gone, deeds that cannot be undone, words that cannot be unspoken, sinners encouraged and religion put to shame, the Spirit grieved, Jesus dishonored and God's holy name profaned?—Is it not enough, and more by far than this world's good can pay for, though Israel be brought a second time from Egypt, and the broken covenant be again renewed? A risk, too uncertain to be taken: for though it is in the promises of God that he will not cast off for ever, it is as plainly written that no covetous man who is an idolater, shall inherit the kingdom of God. There is an incertitude in the profession of religion in the present day, that

* Ezek. xxviii, 4.

makes it more than ever necessary to make our calling and election sure, and look for the testimony of that Spirit whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption. The time was when the profession of Christianity could only be made at the loss of all that is highly esteemed among men; when to follow Christ was necessarily to renounce the world. The test of sincerity was then the sacrifice of all earthly interest, inseparable from the profession of the Gospel. God has never changed the test—Christ has not revoked his words—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself daily, and take up his cross and follow me." But on the outward profession of religion, no such renunciation is now consequent—the man who becomes a Christian has no enforced sacrifice to make, it is a name of honor, indispensable even to his success in life. He may keep all that he has, may aspire to all that he has not, may lay house to house and field to field, and his profession of Christianity be no question or impediment; nay, in our own particular case, so much has even the lesser persecution ceased which was between the worldly professors of Christianity and the more devout, the strictest profession of the Gospel scarcely now involves any involuntary sacrifice

of this world's good. Our great enemy can discern the time, he knows when to infuse the revolting bitter, and when the poisonous sweet into the cup—that cup which Jesus has left for us to drink. Once he would have us dash it from our lips; because the taking of it lost us the present world. Now he would have us drink it adulterated with all base desires, persuading us we may have the present world as well. The sign of the cross with which the persecuting world once branded the foreheads of its followers, must not be engraven, if they will have it, by themselves: never was there a time of so much uncertainty whether it be upon us, of so much required earnestness on our part to make sure of it. And what is the outward and most visible testimony? We have noticed before what God has chosen it should be, the same it always was, inseparable now as heretofore from the reality of religion though not from its profession. Our church defines its character, when she draws the pale lines of baptism on the forehead; how soon to be effaced and disavowed, in the pursuit of all that has been professedly renounced. Brethren, consider this, collate all the Scriptures that speak directly to the point, if you have never done it yet: the number of passages in which

the love of the world is condemned and the pursuit of it forbidden, will surprise and overwhelm you; do this, and say, if professed Christians of the present day are not in danger of perishing eternally, under the condemnation of this sin. Or if not so;—if by redeeming love and sanctifying grace the unrighteous leaven be at length subdued and the vain pursuit forgiven, has the Christian still no fear of judgments, of the furnace seven times heated, that must burn out the stain of earthliness seven times dyed? God's judgments are darkly overhanging, already the enemy are seen in arms, the conflict is on every side preparing. If we be left of Him, "now will the nations hear of it, and compass us around, and cut off our name from the earth."* But the wedge of gold is hidden in the land, it is hidden in the Christian Church. Are we sure, each Christian singly for himself, it is not in his house or in his heart? "Neither will I be with you any more, except you destroy the accursed thing from among you." The Church of Christ will we trust be purified and saved for his "great name;" but woe unto them in whose tent the forbidden thing is found. The

* Joshua, vii, 9.

wealth that he has accumulated for his children, the garments—scarlet and fine linen with which perhaps he has already clothed them, the indulgences with which it is probable he has corrupted and enticed them into sin, the example of earthliness which he has certainly set them, what a pile will there be for the burning, what fuel for the execution of divine wrath! "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten, your gold and your silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together against the last day."*

CONCLUSION.

One word of persuasion after these many words of remonstrance. Simply consider, where, and what we are—or, shall I not say *who* we are? for this debasing sin has made us to forget it, and degrades us in the presence of the universe. If we are what we call ourselves,

* James, v, 1.

Christians, we are the sons and daughters of the Most High, the elect brethren of Jesus Christ—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, in all the riches of his godhead, an eternal weight of glory. This is what we are said to be. And we are bought with a price—redeemed, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. We are not our own—"Ye are Christ's." This is what we say we are. And we are in a world that lieth in wickedness—that passeth away as a shadow—is but as yesterday when it is passed—a day, and no to-morrow. And this is it about the value of which we set ourselves at a disagreement with our Lord—at variance with his word, his judgment and his example; in the pursuit of which we trample upon his laws, do despite to his Spirit, and despise the blessing he has assigned to poverty; in the possession of which we forget the curse that is upon it, and the mind of God respecting it. What have we to do—what can we have to do any more with this base idol? baser than those of wood and stone; they indeed were the work of men's hands—but this is Satan's own—the god of this world, whom worshipping it, we worship. Days of anxiety, and nights of care; troubled intellects, and prayerless hearts; broken communion and dis-

turbed devotions; have Christians ever found the possession worth its cost? And oh, if we could calculate the loss—all that we might have had, and had not for its sake. The state of dependence or independence is it?—dependence upon God, and independence of every thing beside, to which the soldier of Jesus Christ is chosen, is a state the most felicitous that our condition here admits of—nay the happiest of which created being is capable, for it is the very bliss of heaven; it is our advantage in a peculiar sense, by reason of the great evils to which we are exposed, and the moral and spiritual defectability of our earthly nature. The manna that fell day by day round Israel's tents, was not more suited to their homeless, wandering life, than is to ours the promised supply of what each day requires, without any careful thought about to-morrow. It was a provision which the people of the land could not cut off—which the enemy could not come in to make a spoil of, which they had neither trouble to carry, nor fear to leave behind. Oh! do we know what trouble is, and what fear is, and what the thief and the despoiler are, and not perceive the felicity of being secured from all of them? "Be content with such things as ye have;"—to-day with what you have to-day—

to-morrow with the things of to-morrow; a liberal, an almost prodigal supply, it would be found to most of us, if our minds were in conformity with the word of God, and all covetous desires of the flesh exterminated. But the blessedness of dependence in Christ is no mere negative of earthly care, the riches of God are no mere security from want; they are a fulness of satisfaction which the world's good cannot purchase or bestow—or take otherwise away, than by taking that place in the heart which they should occupy. "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." How empty! It is a foolish game the worldly play; for a stake not worth the having, if they win it, and very often lost. Essential emptiness—a broken cistern that will hold no water; a demand never to be diminished by supply. And then how full are they whom God has filled. How rich when every good thing given us here, is so much added to all-sufficient wealth—to infinite riches and eternal glory. "Godliness with contentment is great gain;" gain that brings no temptation, begets no envy, excites no pride, cherishes no selfishness, and misspends no time. As the world has no demand for such possessions, it will not tempt us to divert them from

the service of God, and the prince of this world will claim no homage for them. But while we deal unfaithfully with the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to us the true riches? Christians forego, by their own choice, this abundant blessedness; wherefore David prays, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness; turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way." He knew that these were opposites; that they could not consist together. As contentment cannot consist with unsatisfied desire, nor godliness with a forbidden aim, this gain is unavoidably forfeited by the pursuit of any other. We wilfully forfeit it every day, and wonder that we have it not. We read the sweet promises of God, "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee," and wonder that our hearts are so ill assured, so ill at ease; we talk about the want of interest in our devotions, the joylessness of our prayers, distance from God, and cold anticipations of the life to come. And I believe we talk ourselves sometimes into a melancholy acquiescence in these privations, as something inseparable from our condition. Inseparable from earthly care and earthly ambition, they surely are; but these are no inseparable part of a

Christian's condition. There is a promise of peace, of perfect peace, "Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil." Peace was the last gift of Jesus to his disciples; peace was the first announcement of his coming; peace is the exclusive gift of God, and the sole privilege of his believing people; for Satan, with all his falsehood, cannot cheat us into this, nor the world with all its blandishments confer it on us. Christians, I believe, wonder; I am sure at least they complain, that they enjoy so little of this best boon of heaven; but is it not a fact that even Christians overlook to whom it has been promised? It is the blessing of the poor, the dependent, the unselfish, and the satisfied. We are rich, or mean to be rich, or wish to be rich. If this is the secret, that so few of us enter into our rest, ours though it really be, by the free gift of God, our Saviour's parable would be well applied, "Sell all that you have and buy it." Alienate from yourself the wealth you have, by spending it in the service of God, and for the happiness and benefit of mankind; make yourself poor in the midst of your possessions, by considering nothing that you have to be your own; but a portion rather of the common stock, a common loan from heaven,

committed to you for the use of all: so may you bring yourself, however rich, within the blessing promised to the poor. And go not after more; you have not paid the usury yet of what you have. Men do not get peace by increase of their debts. The more you accumulate the more you will owe to your fellow-creatures and to God, and they may hale you to prison before you have time to pay. If you appropriate to yourself your increase, your claim to poverty will be denied, and the blessing of it lost. Above all things, do not *wish* for more—this is the direst woe of all, for it puts us beyond the reach of God himself to give us peace; the blessing will not stay with us an hour: peace without contentment is impossible.

"Prove me now herewith, said the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.* Give up what God requires of you, those earthly wishes and unhallowed aims, and try if the blessedness he can give you be limited by any thing but your faith to expect it, and your capacity to enjoy it. As disciples of Jesus

* Malachi, iii, 20.

Christ, we are called upon to give back our dishonest acquisitions, to every one his own, "to God the things that are God's"—"your body and your spirit which are his;" to the world its good things, which are not our portion; to Satan his wages, whose service we renounce. It seems that we have robbed them all, and while all are demanding restitution, it is no wonder we are not at rest.

Every church in this imperfect state, has a leaven of evil peculiarly its own, and every age and country its particular temptations, as each individual has his most easily besetting sin. Wherever the defence is weakest or the assault the most violent, the strictest watch and strongest guard are set. His individual danger each one knows, and if he be wise, provides for. But there is a common vigilance every Christian owes to the community—a soldier's duty is not to secure himself alone. It is ours to discern the signs of the times, the temptations of the church, and the sins of the age, making separately as well as unitedly, a firm and open stand against them; lest we become accessary to sins which we may not personally have committed. The amalgamation of the church with the world, and the good terms on which they now commix, has made worldliness to be the

peculiar temptations of the church, while eagerness in the pursuit of wealth, successfulness in the accumulation, and luxury in the enjoyment of it, are the universal characters of the age. At this time, therefore, above every time, a servant of God should show himself faithful by moderation and simplicity of living, by lowliness and contentedness of spirit, by indifference to money and abstinence from the pursuit of earthly things. But I think there is also a danger in the church quite unexampled and exclusively her own: though too much in unison with the character of the times to be unnoticed by the seducer and accuser of the brethren. The church, the true church of Christ, has now first discovered that she *wants money*. I do not impugn the providence of God in this great change. If she who passed over Jordan with a staff, now rides on camels and on horses, with the treasures of Edom and the ships of Tarshish, I do not say that God has not appointed it. The ever-growing requisition that turns to religious purposes so large a revenue, each year increased and still demanding increase, has, I doubt not, the work of God to do, and his blessing on what is done—and it may be for this very purpose, that He has turned the current of his grace upon a different level in so-

ciety from that in which its gracious influence used to be most apparent. But I say that it brings with it a peculiar danger—Christians have a temptation to covetousness which they never had before, and a pretext for accumulation which they are not ashamed to own—they think they can desire money for the love of God. O beware! God has never said so. The ways of his providence may change—his word remains immutable, "Thou shalt not covet." Already the sin discloses itself beneath the sacred veil, and we have grown but too familiar with its language. "I want more money that I may do more good." "I wish I were richer, that I might have more to give." "What a blessing in these days to be rich." When *God* wants more money, he will find it: when He wishes you to give, he will provide the means; meantime I am sure there is no day mentioned in his Holy Book, in which it shall be a blessing to be rich, until Jesus gives us "the riches of the glory of his inheritance." On the contrary, in the latter-day judgments, the curse seems to lie most particularly upon wealth.

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked I shall return thither." Instead of seeking or of wishing more, let us rather denude ourselves of what we have in the service of the Lord,

doing with the day's means the business of the day—for when the work is done for which his church is invested with so much wealth, and moved by his Spirit to so much charity, it is likely she will be stripped to the last shred, that the nations may see her beauty is not in these, and she may know that these are not her blessedness.

HUMAN SYMPATHY.

We often hear complaints of the world's unkindness and injustice, particularly in the conversation of women; and, I have thought, most frequently from those who have made little or no trial of it. That it should be particularly from women, if it were just, is not surprising; for they have most need of, and are most dependent upon others' kindness. That it should be from the young, the untried, the inexperienced, whose opinions of mankind have not been acquired amongst them, whose knowledge of the world is little more than hearsay, and their mode of speaking of it little else than a conventional language, is calculated to bring into doubt the justness of the complaint. And surely if it is not just, it is in a high degree prejudicial to the mind to live under the impression that we have not found, or shall not find, such kindness from our fellow-creatures

when we need it, as our hearts tell us we would show to them.

I drop the question of justice: none of us could bear it from God or man. We all need indulgence and forbearance from each other; as our Divine Master knew, when having tried a little while the form of manhood, and the company of men, he abrogated the law of retribution—"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," and substituted the law of mercy in its stead. And because he did abrogate it, it is no longer in force: we can no more plead it than we can abide it: we all want more love, more help, more consideration than we deserve; and if we have failed in these towards others, we cannot excuse ourselves by saying that we have been just. With respect to that comparative merit which, in a restricted sense, may properly be called deserving—for I do not mean to say that all among their fellow men deserve alike—I think that, generally speaking, justice is done us upon the whole: I mean that, as far as our outward conduct and conversation make us known, we are pretty accurately appreciated by mankind in general: admitting of course some cases of temporary and personal injustice, to which the best are exposed from individuals, against the sense of the community.

But of kindness—is it true that there is, generally a want of kindness in the world? I do not think it is. I have known much of life in its various forms and aspects, and I have not seen that the desolate can find none to pity, the helpless none to take their part: I have not seen the homeless without a welcome, or the lonely without a friend. I have never seen anything but vice, and that not often, left unbefriended by mankind: and, I will add, for it is the mature conviction of my mind, that I have oftener seen kind offices ill-requited, than I have seen them withheld where they were needed. I do not speak this of the religious community in particular, but of the world at large: for I think it is the point, perhaps the single point, in which an ungodly world may challenge comparison with the people of God, in the kindness it shows to its own. If any say that they have *found* otherwise, let them reconsider it: has the kindness been refused them, or have they repelled it? Was the unkindness gratuitous, or did they provoke it? Had they ever a wound from one hand, that another, yea two, were not stretched forth to heal? Did they ever want a friend, and deserve one, and not find one? If any say they have *heard* otherwise, which is the case of by far the greater num-

ber of complaints, let them be aware that there are no impressions so false as those which are made by common talk upon an inexperienced heart: while to go armed into a friendly country, tends only to provoke the hostility we anticipate.

Why then, it may reasonably be asked, if the world is not indeed an unjust one, or an unkind one, has this language so extensively obtained; why is it in all ages the phraseology of the poet and the moralist, whose study is mankind? I think it is because we do not sufficiently distinguish between the want of kindness, and the want of sympathy; between a general kind intention, and willingness to do kind offices towards each other, and that power and aptitude to enter into each others' feelings which may properly be called sympathy. "Arise and help me" is one thing: "Sit down and feel with me" is another. If the one appeal is seldom made in vain, how seldom is the other listened to on earth! It is in this we fail; it is the want of this we suffer; it is this the religion of Jesus should supply; for nature cannot. There are many reasons why it cannot. As if the curse of Babel had lighted on the heart as well as on the tongue, men have ceased to understand each other; the language of each

one's sorrows and his joys has a foreign accent in his brother's ear, with this sad difference; the tongues of Babel had all a community in their strangeness—man's isolated heart has none. From the moment that the blight of selfishness followed upon sin, man, severed from the root on which he grew, seems to have been severed from its branches too, and planted by himself; each one a stranger to the other's mind, and incompetent to appreciate what another feels. Every thing in this world, tending as it does to the increase of selfishness, has added to that incompetency. Ignorance and prejudice, and pride, the narrowing influences of habit and association—all that makes man so much in love with his own individuality, so much preoccupied with his own being, as to look askance upon whatever is not his, to suspect whatever he is not familiar with, and ridicule or scorn whatever he has not, or is not in himself: all has conduced to blunt that generous sensibility which can alone enable us to appreciate the feelings and emotions of another. If some hardier flowers of Paradise have borne transplanting into an ungodly world, and can at times put forth their blossoms in spite of sin's baneful influence; if there is still pity, still kindness and benevolence in the heart of

fallen man; it is not so with this; it died where it was planted, it died when man was separated from his God; the common link was broken; and man does not sympathise with man, not so much because he will not, as because he cannot.

I need not press this truth: there is not a heart that does not respond to it. There is not one of us who does not know the look of vacant wonder, the smile of cold evasion that passes over the countenance, sometimes even of our best and dearest—aye, and our kindest too, if judged by the intention—when the full heart would give utterance to its secret feelings, to joys they never tasted, and sorrows they never knew. Who among us has not marked the impatience, and felt the chill, and shrunk from the touch of unsympathising silence, as if it were real unkindness, which it is not? At no other moment of our lives, perhaps, have we so intensely felt our need of an all-seeing, all-compassionating God. It was this that broke the heart of Job, when external evils could not, and wrung from him, silent before and uncomplaining, such bitterness of grief. Had it no part in the breaking of another heart, when the only One who could have felt sympathy for his

mysterious agony, had for a moment turned his countenance from him?

I have not brought forward the subject to complain. Just consideration should rather stay complaint. When for want of sympathy in our peculiarities of mind or circumstance, others mistake and wound us, it is we who are the unjust, if we attribute to unkindness what is mere incapacity, and undervalue the good intentions because of their inaptness. It would be a moot point, to say the least, which party in a society creates the most discordance, and is the most unreasonable: they who do not sympathise in what they cannot understand—or they who are irritated because they are not understood.

I bring the subject forward, because I feel that if we have all been sufferers on this point, we have also all been guilty. We have not tried to supply what we have felt to be deficient: we have not tried to be to others what we have desired they should be to us: we have not sympathised with each other on a point in which we all profess to feel alike—the want of sympathy. Yet surely, if Christians, re-united to one stem, planted together in the likeness of one life and death, are only just, only benevo-

lent, and in intention kind, it may well be said to them, "What do ye more than others; do not the Scribes and Pharisees the same?" The Word that requires us to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, says also, "Weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice." "If one member suffer, do not all the members suffer with it? If one rejoice, do not all rejoice with it?" Words more briefly significant of real sympathy could not be found; designating most justly that entering into the feelings of another, that nice appreciation of another's mind, with all its peculiarities of character and circumstance, in the world so unknown, in the heart so longed-for, in the sympathy of Jesus so beautifully exemplified. Jesus feels with us, as well as for us: this is the thing we do not for each other. I admit that it is difficult; all is difficult that is against nature; and all is against nature that grace has to do. It is difficult for the rich to sympathise with the poor, the learned with the ignorant, the refined with the vulgar, the gentle with the rude; and quite as much so if we reverse the terms: and as much so for the calm to sympathise with the hasty, the phlegmatic with the sensitive, the firm with the vacillating, the strong-minded with the fearful and the weak.

By no means does the onus lie chiefly with those who seem to have the advantage; the need of sympathy is mutual, and the difficulty is equal. But what has made it difficult? Our self-love and self-preference; our pride, and prejudice, and narrow-mindedness. What made it so easy to Him who had no likeness, no fellow; no sinful infirmities nor mental weaknesses; nothing in common with any man but what is common to us all? It was not his deity that enabled Christ to sympathize with man; else were it beyond our aim to imitate. It was the holiness, the sinlessness, the perfection of his humanity—the absence of all that hinders it in us. If so, it is manifestly our sinful, not our commendable peculiarities, which prevent our mutual sympathy. The difficulty does not arise from the difference of character and disposition God has imparted; but from the darkness, and discordance, and insensibility, into which our nature has fallen. As such it is to be met, to be contended with, and, through grace, to be overcome.

Though natural brotherhood has proved too cold a soil to bear the heavenly plant—and nowhere perhaps is the want of it so deeply felt, as among the really attached members of the same family—there is yet a garden, which

might promise better, if more pains were taken to plant it there. But we enter God's adopted family, each in the full panoply of his own self-love, and find that we understand each other no better than in the world. Every one has his own Christian, as well as his own natural, character; and no one shows consideration of another's. We share their labors, supply their wants; do any thing but enter into their thoughts and feelings as if they were our own: and we excuse ourselves on the ground that we cannot sympathise in what we never experienced, nor enter into characters so uncongenial with our own. But this is not like Christ. He wept on earth for sorrows he did not share; for sins in which he could have no participation; he sympathises in heaven with every emotion of the believer's bosom—he, the pure, the high the heavenly, the omnipotent! And we, whom nothing distinguishes but some difference of sin; some difference of infirmity; some trifle, more or less, of light and shade upon the same base mould;—we say we cannot sympathise with each other, because we are not alike!

ON

THE USES OF COMMON THINGS.

"AND THEY THAT USE THIS WORLD, AS NOT ABUSING IT; FOR THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY."—1 CORINTHIANS vii, 31.

ON THE USE OF SUPERFLUITIES.

NOTHING is unimportant which affects, or can be, in the remotest degree, connected with practical religion; and what is there in the life and conversation of the child of God, over which the newly imparted principle of divine life can exercise no influence or control. I always grieve to hear it said, "What has religion to do with this?" Religion is the worship and the will of God—Christianity is the worship and will of God manifested in Jesus Christ: unless there be any thing in us, or about us,

with which God has nothing to do; anything we have, or do, or are independently of him; unless we have any possession over which He has no right; any faculty on which He has no claims; or any powers respecting which He has no will, there cannot be any thing with which Christian principle has nothing to do. Religious principle has to do with dress, and company, and conversation, and amusements, and all the lighter, as well as graver occupations of this childhood of our spiritual existence; in which, if our heavenly Father left us unrestained, we should presently hurt ourselves, even with our toys. But if we separate from general principles the minute details of Christian practice, to discuss every particular apart, we shall very soon bring upon ourselves, and what is worse, upon our Christian profession, the *argumentum ad absurdum.* "What has religion to do with a tune, a color, the shape of a bonnet, or a motion of the feet?" are questions which cannot be answered, neither, I am persuaded, profitably discussed, without connecting the links of the disjointed chains, apart from which they have neither utility nor importance. Noboby *can* show—and for the encouragement of the despisers on the one hand, and the troubling of the tender conscience on

the other, I think it is a pity we should try to show—what preference the will of God can have between pink and brown, between ribbons and flowers, between one arrangement of musical sounds and another, between a measured movement and a careless romp—above all, what objection He can have, or what prohibition extend to the exhibition anywhere of the exquisite workmanship of his own wonder-working hand. I shall not hesitate to say, that taken in the abstract, and apart from circumstances that may, or may not, be attached, such a preference, such an objection, such a prohibition is impossible. Who taught the infant eye to manifest almost its first susceptibility of delight at the preception of some brilliant color? And who set us the example, who taught us to gratify this innate sense, but He who painted the tulip and the rose, who dressed the heavens in blue, and clothed the earth in green, and gave to man the faculties and the materials with which to imitate every shade of coloring that he sees in nature. Was it done to snare our fancy with external show, and teach our senses a forbidden pleasure? Who taught the little worm to spin so exquisite a tissue for its own repose, and ply from age to age its selfish toil; unconscious that it labors for another? For

whom? For what? Our necessities? No,—the silk and velvet are not necessary: it is for our indulgence; for ornament, for splendor, for the gratification of our earthly taste. And who, if it is necessary to go on, communicated the scent to the lavender, and the juices to the pine, and to every fruit its own peculiar flavor, to please what we justly consider the lowest of our appetites?

I have met with Christians who think that a dust-begotten creature is misemployed in using, and his hand in cultivating, and his eye in gazing upon what the eternal God has employed his power to make; who express themselves as if they thought it beneath the intellect of a mortal man to like, to value, to enjoy, what infinite wisdom has adapted to his liking; and time mis-spent in the study of that material creation over which the hosts of heaven sang with joy, and shouted to behold its wonders.

But the earth is cursed, they say, and man is fallen. He is indeed, and there needs no stronger proof of it, than that having brought down the curse by choosing to have, and aspiring to know what was forbidden him, he justifies it by disdaining to enjoy thankfully, as the gift of God, and examine studiously, as the work of God, what was designed to gratify his

earthly senses. and exercise the faculties of his mind, in due subordination to higher and better things. Shall I be bold to say that, considered by itself, I do not believe it is sinful, in the most devoted child of God, to use, to wear, to possess, or otherwise to enjoy, any of the things that God has made, or enabled us to make by the skill He has imparted and the materials He has supplied. The sin, when there is sin, and, alas! how much there is in our use of all his bounties, is to be looked for in contingencies, in over-estimation and undue preference, in excess, in misappropriation, in influences and associations, in ends and aims and motives; affecting our spiritual as well as moral health; our life in Christ, as well as in the world, the eternal as well as present purpose of our Creator and Redeemer.

The objection to these sinless instruments of sin, being a thing of time, and place, and circumstance, which will vary continually; it is exactly one of these points in which we should forbear to judge others, and suffer ourselves to be judged of no man, so as to shackle our walk or burden our conscience in a life of faith; above all should we abstain from drawing up a code of inapplicable laws, and calling every thing inconsistent that is not in conformity with

them: at the same time that we feel conscientiously feel, each one for ourselves, our deep responsibility before God, for the minutest particular of our life and conversation, as children of light in a dark and sinful world. The apostle says, "To the pure all things are pure" and "all things lawful," but "not all expedient." Man is not pure, the child of God is not perfect; and because sin is within him and around him everywhere, many things lawful and good in their nature, may be most highly injurious to ourselves, or a cause of offence and stumbling to others. It does not alter their nature, making universally bad what God made good; but it does so alter the relative character of things, as to be to individuals an imperative prohibition of their use. If it be asked how we are to discriminate without general rules? I answer, by general principles, honestly applied to our own particular case, in every particular question as it arises, assisted by prayer and the written word.

Leaving the details then as unfit and useless subjects of discussion, allow me to dwell a little upon the general principles upon which the superfluities of life are or are not allowable to the family of God. By superfluities, I mean all the elegancies, luxuries, style, and orna-

ment, whether in the equipment of our persons, our houses, and tables, or whatever else, that belongs to what is called polite or genteel life, beyond what is essential to decency and utility. For I must say it appears to me a childish inconsequence, for a lady to sell her gold chain for charity, and give four times its value for a candelabrium, to ornament her table. If a piece of ribbon will hold a watch, a piece of pottery will hold a candle; and I can see neither common sense nor common honesty, in making a distinction between personal and domiciliary decorations. The lady who sells her jewels must surely tamper with her conscience, if she does not sell all her superfluous and ornamental plate. If she foregoes the velvet and the silk, the purple and fine linen, there must go with them the sumptuous fare, the damask, the rosewood, and the marble. For if the sin be in the useless expenditure, it is equally applicable to both cases. If it be vanity, display, ostentation, it is as probable in the one case as the other. If it be in the tone of mind, the earthliness of feeling, and conformity to the world, indicated by such indulgences, no distinction can be established between one and the other manifestation of the evil. There is but one point of view in which personal ornament

may claim a sin peculiar to itself, which scarcely belongs to our present subject; because neither the most costly nor the most decorated dress is necessarily the most becoming; and if it were, personal beauty is the gift of God, and, as in all his other gifts, the sin must arise out of the misuse or over-appreciation of it. I believe it is in the order of his designs, that every woman may, and perhaps ought to preserve that measure of personal *agremens*, which she receives from her Maker's hands, as far as consists with modesty, decency, and propriety, her station, age, and means. I am not writing upon the love of admiration; but if I may go out of my way to make a painful observation, I have been in company with religious females, when even the prohibited chain or necklace would have been some small relief, in the destitution of more modest covering.

We need not appeal again to the earth that He has filled, and the heavens that He has made, to prove that God consulted his own glory and goodness, and not our necessities, in the superfluities with which He has fitted and beautified the habitation of his creatures. That He so consulted the benefit as well as the happiness of mankind, can scarcely be denied, by any who

have considered the constitution of man, and the relationship of society.

Immediately on the fall, the sentence of labor was pronounced; a most wise and pitiful sentence, although a portion of the curse—at once the most powerful check upon corruption, and the greatest alleviation of our misery. Next to that restraining grace which we suppose to be always in exercise, nothing saves the whole community of man from the extremity of sin and woe, but the necessity under which the great mass of people find themselves, of caring for their own existence, of employing themselves about the means to live. What would the stupid peasant be, and in fact what is he, when, his labor suspended, he sits down to consider the privations of his lot? What is the less stupid, but more vicious artisan, when, for want of occupation, he begins to calculate the injustice of his fortunes? And why are the richest class, with all their "appliances and means to boot," so notoriously the most restless, and unsatisfied, and vicious, but because they have all their time, and faculties, and powers, on their own hands, and know not how to occupy and employ them? Yet where, except in the production of superfluities—and how, but

in the permitted use of superfluities, has the beneficent wisdom of God provided for the accomplishment of this compassionate sentence? Can we not trace his providential care, in the slow discovery of natural properties, and gradual development of human power in applying them, in proportion as the increasing race of man made new inventions necessary to supply him with employment? And now, in the world's old age, with the terrors of a disoccupied population perpetually before us, from time to time relieved by some fresh invention, discovery, or contrivance, what would ensue upon the resolution, should it be generally adopted, that the use of superfluities is to be renounced, and, whatever the amount of our income, expenditure to be restricted to the decencies and necessities of life! Does the philanthropic spirit bound with joy at thought of this elysium; when all that we have above our wants will be given in charity, and there will be ease and sufficiency for all? We will not inquire of the political economist, what sort of a world we should inhabit by this time, had such a resolution obtained from the beginning; a little reflection will instruct the simplest of us what would follow on its adoption now. How would our pauperised community enjoy our bounty

and occupy their leisure? Would they serve God with it? We know they would not, and if they would they could not, for idleness is not the service he accepts. If they who now weave the ribbons, or, if you please, the flowers; they who dive for the pearl within its watery bed, or fetch the diamond from its dark hiding-place; and they that set the sail and ply the oar to bring our luxuries in; and they that carve the fret-work and paint the china, and devise the costly pattern; and the hundred others kept at work by even one of these useless productions—suppose them bidden to forego their labors, and accept from our charity what we determine no longer to expend upon their workmanship. Mortified dependence, dissolute idleness, and ultimate misery, would be the destiny of the greater part of the recipients of our alms: to the givers, I think it would be the relinquishment, rather than the fulfilment of their stewardship; to ease themselves of the responsibility of using for the benefit of all what is committed to them. I think it would be to refuse any longer to maintain the position assigned us, by reason of its difficulties; to throw back to God his money, that there may be no questioning for its moderate, righteous and judicious use. I am not sure but we might

risk to be of those who give all their goods to feed the poor, yet have not charity.

If we are not to do this, to denude ourselves of all that is superfluous to our necessities, it becomes a question merely of degree as respects the claims of charity and of personal holiness, in the expenditure of what remains. Of the former we can only say generally, for we have never met with any fixed proportion that satisfied us; that they who spend in self-indulgent luxury what they know it would do more good to give away, and they that refuse to give on any due occasion, because they prefer to spend, will find their condemnation in the word of God; and in their conscience too, if they will let it speak. In the just and righteous expenditure of what remains, I think is to be met the real, the difficult, responsibility of every child of God, in a corrupted and corrupting world; in it, but not of it; the light that is to light it; the salt that is to salt it; and yet so separate from it, so distinct, so different, as never at any time to be confounded with it; a sympathising participant in its sorrows and its welfare; a careful willing respondent to its claims; but not conformed to its fashions, nor led by its opinions, nor governed by its laws. It is a responsibility so difficult to those who

have riches, that we might well prefer poverty, if we were allowed to choose; and purchase a release by giving all away, if so the order of providence permitted.

Not only is the Christian to use the good things of this life without abusing them, but he is to enjoy them, without loving them; to have them, without seeking them; to possess them, without supposing them to be his own. Paradoxical in terms, this is practically very simple, and with respect to the use of superfluities, perhaps does make the real distinction between the people of God and the people of the world. The Christian woman who cares, with anything approaching to anxiety, about the decoration of her house or person, who covets wealth for the sake of its superfluities, or envies wealth, because it can afford them: whose heart is lifted up by what she has or cast down and ashamed for what she cannot have; who spends her thoughts in contriving for what is not easily within her reach, or her time in producing what she cannot afford to buy; be it gold or be it gems, be it ribbons or be it flowers, be it to the value of units or of thousands, brings a guilt upon the conscience that will never pertain to one who uses her superfluities as she uses her titles, because they belong to her condition,

because they become her station, because it would require more thought, and attract more attention, and be really and truly more ostentatious to go without them; or even because they are pleasing to her taste, and agreeable to those around her, and a medium of communicating to others the pleasure to be derived from such indulgences as her fortunes providentially afford. The wish to spend, not what we have, but what we have not got; to enjoy, not what God has given, but what he has denied us; to do with a little what others do with much; the contrivances to eke out our poverty, and manœuvres to conceal it; the eagerness of getting, and the restlessness of wanting, and the mortification of not having, and all that soul-consuming care how to find means and meet expenses, for things, which to go without, ought not to cost a sigh, or a thought of sadness, or a blush of shame: could we acquit the Christian community of such sins as these, we might keep safely our jewels and our gold, till we leave them for the crystal pavement of the eternal city, and pass her gates of pearl.

One other consideration remains: there should be an apparent, as well as a real difference between the people of God and the people of the world. We are commanded to "let our

moderation be known unto all men," to let it be seen of man, as well as of God, that we renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Moderation and simplicity may equally characterise the Christian walk, in leaving or in using, and set upon the disciples of Jesus a distinguishable mark. Less splendor, less ornament, less luxury, less ceremony, and less expense than is customary among persons of equal fortune and similar condition, will ever be the manifestation of a mind renewed, and a heart detached from earth, freed from bondage, and afraid of sin. "What have they seen in thy house?" is an inquiry we must be prepared to meet. I cannot further pursue the subject, and I the less desire to do so, in that, notwithstanding the regret I sometimes hear expressed upon this point, as far as my own observation extends, I think such a moderation *is* more or less perceptible in every religious house.

ON THE USE OF HOSPITALITY.

In nothing, perhaps, is God's creative purpose more completely traversed than in the social intercourse of the world. That the desire of such intercourse, apart from what is necessary, is of his implanting, can need but little proof—all nature bears witness to the fact. There is not an animal, I could almost say there is not a flower, that likes to be alone. Every bird will chirp at the sight of another bird; and every lamb will answer to another's bleating. In all existence, there is only God who is sufficient to himself; and even He willed to communicate his happiness, by peopling the universe in which he dwelt alone, with beings who could at least derive it from him, though they could not add to his. If ever man, fallen from God, falls from his own nature too, loses all desire for association with his kind, and would dwell in total separation, if he could—

he got not that disposition from his Maker. The morbid feelings of his mind are no more the healthful action of nature, than are the low throbbings of the heart, when disease has turned its fleshly lobes to stone. How soon the infant cries for its companion! How instinctively the school-boy runs where he sees others playing. Sin, and its progeny of ills, cannot so early teach them to seek their pleasures independently.

The use which Satan and the world have made of this natural propensity to associate, is a dark story indeed. Hand has joined in hand to do what no one had dared to do alone—to defy their Maker, and forget Him. How well the guilty compact has succeeded, is attested by the fact, that when God would get himself a servant upon earth, he called him out from his kindred and his father's house: and when he would keep himself a people, he forbad them all amalgamation with the nations round; and still says to every one who desires to be his, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." Upon the customary exercise of hospitality, the established modes of visiting, and what are called the pleasures of society in the present day, I do not intend to dwell; still less to draw a darkened picture. If I had some one

by me well versed in the usages of the world, still living in its focus, and of candid mind, she should sketch the portrait for me with her own pencil: she should say what she intends when she sends out the invitation: what she aims at when she prepares the entertainment: and what is the result when all is over. Wanting such unsuspected testimony, I pass by the world's society; of the stamps that memory sets upon it, restlessness in youth, and joylessness afterwards, are the strongest impressions. The believer knows he must not seek his enjoyment in worldly association; and if he might, he could not find it; for there is nothing in it that would please him. The experiment of continuing in society beyond what duty or benevolence requires, often as it has been made, has been a universal failure; which, if not in shame, has ended in disgust. Perhaps it would not as often have been tried, nor so painfully and disgracefully have been defeated, had a due estimate been made at first, of what is of God in our social appetency, and what is man's perversion of it: and in what manner the natural impulse, instead of being hastily interdicted, or perilously indulged, might be restored to the uses for which it was intended.

It cannot be doubted, I suppose, that God in-

tended our love of society to be a source of enjoyment, as well as of improvement—of intellectual as well as spiritual improvement; to the promoting of each other's happiness in this life, as well as to the assisting of each other's preparation for eternity. These are objects of such magnitude and extent, as, if I have named them rightly, will answer at once the question whether religion should extinguish the social taste, or make us unmindful of its demands. It has perhaps a tendency to do both. As soon as the world's society becomes unsuitable, and its pleasures are relinquished, interests so new, so vivid, so sufficient, take possession of the soul, no void is felt from what is parted with: or if it is, a sense of duty and safety in the relinquishment substitutes tranquillity in the stead of pleasure. Self thus satisfied, it is but too much in our nature to forget the claims of others. If we do not want society, society in vain wants us: when our own cup is full, we do not care to see whose else is empty; or while our own spirits flow, to inquire whose may stagnate. Thus religion, contrary, I believe to the divine intention, acquires a tendency to render us unsocial: to say nothing of the weakening of all those mighty counteracters of self-indulgence in the world, which tend so much the

other way; vanity, and ostentation, and the love of praise.

But should it be so? Are religious people, whose pious occupations prove sufficient to fill up their time and keep their minds employed without society, at liberty to withdraw from it? Is it what is good for themselves, or due to others, or in order with the design of providence? These are questions that constantly recur to me, when I hear religious people say, they have not time to visit: their duties do not admit of their receiving company: and higher interests are made a reason for the suspension of all exercise of hospitality. To put the query in its simplest form, is man at liberty to live apart, as soon as he likes to do so? including of course his domestic circle, which is but an extension of individual existence: it is *his own*, and so *himself*. I do not pretend to make individual applications of the principle: the degree of intercourse, the means, and the occasions, must vary in every case, and makes an endless variation in the exercise of hospitality; but principles never vary; and, once made clear to the understanding, the simple in heart will seldom err in the application of them.

If social intercourse is the appointment of God, it is almost superfluous to show that it is good

for us: his appointments are never the arbitrary exercise of his will, but in all cases the beneficent arrangements of his wisdom. The self-magnifying, self-preferring, self-indulgent process which goes on in a family circle, can scarcely be insensible to any but themselves. It is a universal law of nature, that disuse diminishes the capability of things, while exercise increases it. The seldomer our thoughts are communicated, the less communicable they become; the seldomer our sympathies are awakened, the less ready are they to wake; and if social affections be not stirred by social intercourse, like a neglected fire, they smoulder themselves away, and consign the heart to coldness. If we think that on the score of enjoyment, the independence which ensues upon such detachment, be more than a compensation to ourselves for the loss of mutual interest, unless this be also the choice of others, and the common good of all, it is still to be considered, whether we are at liberty to withdraw our quota of enjoyment from the common fund, to increase it for ourselves.

We naturally ask, in what manner are Christians to associate? I think in any manner that will subserve the design of our Creator; that will promote mental and spiritual improvement, increase our enjoyments in the present life, and

brighten our anticipations of another. I must again, with all modesty, for I am aware there may be high authorities amongst them—protest against the opinions of those who think that religious people may meet only for expressly spiritual purposes; that no exercise or enjoyment of hospitality is legitimate, unless such be its defined object. The Christian, if he be indeed spiritually-minded, will not leave his religion at home; and it is, by God's grace accompanying, a communicable thing. In every company it should be our leading desire both to gain it and to impart it; forgotten in society it surely never should be; and nothing is allowable that can make it to be forgotten. Still there are other objects, not less the will of God, although subordinate, which may bring Christians into society with each other: and not the least of these, if I read his gracious will aright, is the promotion of each other's temporal happiness, the lightening of this world's care, the relaxation of this world's toils, the sharing of those who have, with those who have not, those gifts of time so variously distributed by the Almighty, whether they be mental or external gifts. Should not sadness drink of gaiety's sparkling cup? Should not poverty eat from wealth's luxurious dish? and ignorance draw out of the

stores of knowledge? and loneliness have a seat beside the crowded fire? Does He who paints the flower, and dresses the worm in gold, to please another worm, think it too small a reason for our meeting that we can please each other? It can be scarcely necessary to say how immeasurably distant is this desire to please, from the vain display, the wasteful expenditure and rivalry of pride, which so often characterise the world's assemblies, and may as much characterise a religious one, if not conscientiously abstained from. These things, instead of promoting sociability, do really impede it in no small degree: the trouble and expense attending such exercise of hospitality rendering it necessarily less frequent, more exclusive, and often impossible. Not less diverse are the unholy excitement, the mental dissipation, and waste of health, so frequent in worldly amusements, from the pleasure proposed to be communicated. They also are rather substitutes for sociality, than ingredients of it. Cards, and dancing, and other similar amusements, are the resources of hearts too mutually indifferent, to derive pleasure from social intercourse: of minds that neither care nor mean to be drawn out for each other's benefit when they meet. Shall we so dishonor the social nature im-

parted by our Creator, or the divine nature superadded by his grace, as to suppose that a society cannot be cheerful, affectionate, interesting, without those subsidiaries of vanity and folly?

Mental improvement is an important object of social intercourse: one to which I should call it indispensable: and I would press the point in particular upon the attention of religious parents. The communication of children with each other, beyond the family circle, is almost always injurious; they have nothing to impart that is beneficial: but ample capacity by collision to call forth, if not to originate what is evil. Pious parents, I believe, never do so wisely as when they bring up their children apart from other children. But when they cease to be children, and before, as far as it can be accomplished in the society of grown people, social intercourse is indispensable to the formation of the mind and character: books alone will not do it. There have not been found anywhere understandings so perverted as some that have been formed by study, without the intercourse of men. And I think we cannot with any candor deny that religion, and the ministry of religion are sometimes at a disadvantage by insufficient knowledge of mankind,

the result of restricted intercourse. If it be asked what sort of society, or what manner of intercourse is calculated to improve the mind, I should say, every sort and every manner that is not calculated to corrupt it. No conversation, entirely free from an evil tendency, is unimproving: there is no person of correct principles, by communication with whom we may not learn something; or unlearn something, which is not the least benefit of association: for there are errors of judgment, and defects of character, which never can be corrected otherwise. Would we send our families then into mixed society for improvement? Not mixed of the sinful ingredients of this world's fashions and opinions: the risk is too great, and the price is too high for whatever might be gained; and the divine prohibition has not left us the choice: it is forbidden: but I think, parents for their children, and some of us for ourselves, make a mistake in supposing that society cannot be improving unless it be accompanied by some religious exercise, or hallowed by the presence of some pious minister; or unless the conversation be directly upon religious topics: thus confining themselves and their families, to assemblies, whether public or private, which excellent as they may be for higher purposes,

are really not opportunities of intellectual improvement.

This allusion brings us naturally to the last great object of social intercourse; the spiritual good of each other. On this point society has its dangers as well as its benefits: but if the latter had not predominated, the communion of saints had not been left by our Lord, an encouragement and a blessing to his church during his absence from her: his example, his word, and the exhibition of religion made by his apostles, would not have had the social tone which every where pervades them; and man would not have had implanted in him the desire and necessity for spiritual communication, felt in every bosom where it has not been destroyed by injurious habits or morbid sentiments. In our understanding of things spiritual there is much that may be rectified or elucidated by comparison with the mind of others. Dogmatism, narrowness, and party pride, are the evil growth of uncommunicated religious sentiments, with ignorance of the sentiments of others. If such be the need of the understanding, what are the necessities of the heart for Christian fellowship? Who will say he wants no help, wants no encouragement, wants no light from another's lamp, nor warmth from another's fire?

He would be too bold who said it, and too proud who thought it. But if it should be so, there is another question, Does nobody want help of us?

The power of communicating spiritual good in company is certainly very unequal, bearing no proportion to the measure of the spirit individually possessed; and the feeling of this acts as an inducement to some to withdraw themselves. But all have something to impart; they may encourage where they cannot teach, or they may not be good judges whether they can or not: or it may be a duty to try although we fail; at the least, in an interchange of good, there must be receivers as well as givers: and we may be the one when we fail to be the other. Our light, miserable and flickering as it may be, must shine before men; as well in the social circle as on the domestic hearth: and if by circumstances or connection, or their own inclinations, the children of this world be brought within our reach, I cannot but think that a cheerful, benevolent, unostentatious hospitality should be exercised towards them, in the simple, prayerful hope, that they may be benefited by our society. A dishonest mind may make this an excuse for being found in any company, or encouraging any intimacy; but then I am

afraid the lamp is left at home; or is put out for the time, that it may not be disagreeable to our guests. It is one thing to give wholesome refreshment to them that ask it, and another to eat of their unwholesome viands; it is one thing to present the pure draught of water, and another to accept the inebriating cup. In this sort of intercourse there must be no self-sacrifice: we have no command of God to be generous in spiritual things, putting our own principles to peril in the hope of imparting them. No motive can justify association that we find to be injurious to ourselves.

The manner of intercourse best calculated to promote spiritual improvement, is the point on which there will be most difference of opinion among those who have but one object: and probably no method is exclusively the best. If my own feeling is in favor of that near communion of mind to mind, and heart to heart, which takes place when two speak together of the things of God, rather than of more extended conversation: still the latter is very beneficial, where those who know the least may listen and inquire of the more experienced. By no means do I think spiritual improvement confined to conversation on religious topics: the very character of spirituality is to mix religion

with every thing; to deal with secular things religiously, to cast the hues of heaven over the things of earth, and let its holy influence fall insensibly, like the dew drops of which no one marks the falling. Nor do I think that reading or prayer are indispensable to this best end, however conducive to it, in our social meetings.

ON THE USE OF MUSIC.

It is not long since I heard a Christian lady contend that it is not sinful to attend the Opera, although she fully thought it so to go to the other theatres, because the Opera is attended for the sake of the music only. I felt persuaded she had never been there, and did not altogether know what she was defending: but the predominant feeling of my mind was, How insidious are the falsehoods of him who is the father of lies, since he can persuade men that a place where iniquity walks unveiled, where vice of every description finds encouragement, and sin both gives and takes its highest wages, can be sanctified to the believer's use, by the profanation of one gift the more—of one of the most powerful and delightful gifts of God. Yet is this, in different forms, no very uncommon language. We meet with persons who have separated themselves generally from the world's society; but will go any

where, into any company, for the sake of music. We find parents, who would not admit into their families a poem or tale, in which might be found a profane word, or an unholy suggestion, totally indifferent to the words of a song, because it is accompanied with music. We sometimes see, I hope not often in religious houses, a large proportion of early life employed, the mind dissipated, and money most prodigally expended, because a child has been endowed with this sweet gift of nature—music. O holy God! how is it thou canst bear with such base dealing—in that which thou hast created for thine own glory—in them whom thou hast called by thy name! This I would say, in most deep earnestness to every professing Christian, if you will go for music, if you will do for the sake of music, or allow, or justify, what without it you would consider wrong, your act is no more hallowed by its object, than was the feast of Dagon, by the use of the sacred vessels of the temple.

As far as we can penetrate the design of God in this extraordinary gift, it is at once to gratify the senses and improve the character of man. I am far from believing God's gifts restricted to utility, in the common sense. We sometimes hear it said, every thing in creation is for

use: God made not any thing in vain. The truth of this depends on the sense in which we use the words. We must not attribute to the mind of God our own small notions of use and uselessness, any thing and nothing; lest we judge like a child, who takes its few mimic bricks to build a house, and calls it a little one; adds a few more, and says it is a great one. God made the creature for his own enjoyment; it could not add to his: he imparted his existence, that he might impart his happiness, and be glorified in the exercise of his beneficence. Nothing is useless therefore that promotes the innocent enjoyment of any sentient being. Myriads of creatures live to no other end but to enjoy a brief existence, and be it an hour, a day, or a single season, it has served its purpose, and God has had this glory in it. That he bestows upon it such exquisite workmanship for so small a purpose, is worthy the infinity of his power and goodness. Say that the insect feeds a larger insect; this we call its use: that larger insect lives to the same end, enjoys itself and dies: and if it feeds another larger still, the last worm serves only the same purpose as the first. If it be said that all are for the use of man—that seems too proud an assertion. How useful to us a portion of all living things are made, is a

perpetual manifestation of God's goodness: but as there are myriads that man never uses, it cannot be the sole object of their creation. And of all this beautiful world, in all its curious properties, as given to the dominion, and adapted to the faculties of man, how small a part could be called useful, if the term were to exclude whatever serves only for his temporary gratification. The higher enjoyments for which man was created, and to which he is reserved, make this indeed of little moment in the comparison; so little, that we have come to call things useful and useless according as they tend or not to our preparation for eternity: using positive terms for things comparative, by reason of the amazing distance that is between them. The words serve well enough for their purpose; but we must remember again, that it is worthy of Deity to have expended great wisdom, and great power and benevolence, upon the lesser end of man's existence here: even upon his transient and temporary enjoyment of a life that is but preparatory to a better. We shall be wide, I believe, of the purposes of God, if we determine any thing in his mind useless, that promotes the innocent enjoyment of his creatures; or suppose no use of his gifts legitimate, unless it serve the higher end of our

existence. If so, the Creator has wrought much in vain, in all that he has made to gratify our mortal sense; and this we dare not think. Easy it is, indeed, to lose the greater in the lesser uses, the spiritual in the temporal, the eternal in the transient; but man's perversion does not alter God's design; to which alone his people are to conform themselves.

I shall seem to have wandered from my subject; but I wish to explain myself in saying, that music is intended to gratify our senses, as well as for a higher purpose; aware that this may be disputed in the application, if not in the abstract, by those who take the most rigid view of the requirements of the Gospel.

If I am right, the use of music, as a mere pleasure, must have the same limitation as every other recreation:—that it does not occupy too much time, too much thought, or too much of any thing that could be better spent; and that it be not the occasion of sin in ourselves, or the encouragement of sin in others. Of the restriction no opinion can be given that is universally applicable; it must vary, with the means and the duties of every individual; there is nothing in it distinct from other recreations; the Christian need be very honest with himself and God, to regulate lawfully his lawful

pleasures—but no one can do it for another; and light will be granted us if we seek it with uprightness. Of the prohibition I would add something to what I have already said of making music an excuse for the countenance of sin.

The very striking remarks of Mr. Newton, with reference to the Oratorio of the Messiah, so often quoted and so justly appreciated, can hardly, I think, apply to the believer. The madness of a world that makes an amusing fiction of its ruin, and mocks the Redeemer with the rehearsal of his passion, is not participated by the believer. He hears the words and uses them as realities, in which his deepest interests are involved; a feeling increased, not dissipated, by the effect of the music on his senses. Mr. Newton could not mean to complain that men realising their condition, should set their pardon or their sins to music; this David did—this Moses did—this God commands us to do in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; and we expect that we shall do so in heaven. The sin cannot be in thus using the inspired word of God, some of the most impressive portions of which were probably first delivered with music; but in the unbelief and insensibility with which they are so used. The question to the believer resolves itself into this

—Whether he may witness a performance, in the sin of which he does certainly not participate; or countenance a practice, not sinful in itself, but sinfully practised. I know that I differ from many pious people in thinking that he may; provided there be in the place, or time, or circumstances of the entertainment, no sinful concomitant, but such as is confined to the bosom of the ungodly, who may be partakers with us either in the performance or the pleasure. Where can the believer hide himself, in this ungodly world, if he may not share sinlessly what others share sinfully? Where can he eat, where can he drink, where can he work or play? Are not men doing lawful things sinfully every where in the like manner, by using the things of God without a thought of God, and with ungodly hands profaning them? "Then," says the apostle, "ye must needs go out of the world." There would be no place of safety in it; not even in the sanctuary, where we hear the sacred words responded from unholy lips and unbelieving hearts and mix with the profane in the most sacred ceremonies; take, possibly, even the hallowed emblems from unhallowed hands. It may be said that in this case, we do not know it; but we do know it certainly, and our church has

been called upon to decide that the ministration is not affected by the wickedness of them that minister. If in the most sacred things the instrument be nothing, why should it be anything in an amusement which tends to elevate the believer's mind, to lift his heart to God, and soothe and make ashamed the agitations of passion and self-love. There may be minds, that, by associations of bygone folly, or wanting the power of abstraction, have evil thoughts so awakened, or better thoughts so disturbed, by the profane machinery, as to find it to themselves an injurious pleasure. This is an individual question; again we must be honest with ourselves and God, whether we be harmed or benefited by the performance. If it be the occasion of sinful feelings it must be a forbidden pleasure; but individual feelings may not be established into a rule for others. Should it be suggested that our subscription encourages the performers in an ungodly course, I think this is not so, unless music, as a profession, is an unlawful calling, which nobody supposes; if it were, we should do the same wrong, whenever we engage, as we do, the same persons for private instruction.

It may perhaps be thought that these reasons go to justify the Christian's attendance at any

kind of musical entertainment, though the music should not be sacred. No: the objections in that case have quite another bearing. They are the influence of such music on the heart; the feelings it is calculated to excite; the wishes it is likely to awaken; the dissipation of mind, the forgetfulness of God, the indisposition to devotion, and distaste for graver things in which it leaves us; perhaps the offence to God by which it is accompanied, in profane and licentious language. In public or private, alone at the piano, or in the crowded walk, such use of the divine gift is sin. If we think that we can brave it harmless, we are mistaken; or if we can, we must not, lest we be the occasion of sin to others. Would we know what music is thus excluded, the answer is very simple—all that has such effects—a little honesty would remove a world of difficulties—the experienced believer knows what dims his light, and what makes it burn the brighter: the young in Christ may walk safely by example till time approves their course.

I have thus spoken of what I think to be the permitted use of music, as an enjoyment of our temporal estate: but surely God has designed it for more than a transient gratification of the mortal sense. If he has, we are as responsible

for not using it as for using it amiss; and though I can do so but in general terms, I would urge it on every Christian family to consider whether they have made all the use of it they might do for their own good and that of others. I believe the moral influence of music to be very great: we well know how it is made available to inflame the passions of the multitude, to provoke to deeds of heroism or of blood, or to enervate and enfeeble, by its voluptuous influence. A sedative and a stimulant by turns, there is no medicament to which the heart is more susceptible; and I believe the habitual use of it capable of exercising a permanent influence over the disposition. If accustomed to watch our own emotions, we must all have felt its effect at some time or other, in a softened temper, a tranquilised spirit, a generous warmth of feeling. Of all the things which act upon the heart, through the medium of the outward sense, music is one of the most powerful to excite to love, whether human or divine, to God or man. It is no harmless toy we have to play with. We have had painful opportunities of observing families in which music is the engrossing pleasure and almost business of life; remarking the levity, and insobriety of mind that characterised every mem-

ber of such a family. We have seen others in which, well-directed, and moderately pursued, it has seemed like a bond of sympathy that tunes a whole house to cheerfulness, harmony and love. These are extreme cases: but they prove the powerful influence of music in domestic life. If it did no more than promote cheerfulness in a family circle, it would serve a great end; for cheerfulness is a Christian grace of no mean value; perhaps too little cultivated; but I am persuaded it can do more, by softening the asperities of our nature, stilling its perturbations, and encouraging its more tender emotions.

And because there is a higher end of our existence here, than either temporal enjoyment or moral culture, music has a use as much above all this, as the heavens are above the earth, and immortality above the worth of time. I mean as an instrument of devotion. It is the worship God himself has chosen: it is the worship of nature; it is the worship of heaven. I believe that whenever the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his knowledge shall cover it as the waters cover the sea, the voice of devotion will be heard in music from every glade and mountain, from every path and habitation of the just. I wish, as far

as might be, that it were so now: for though the world's dissonance would mar the concert, and to the scattered members of the flock, a brother's song be scarcely audible in the distance, it would be a grateful sound in angels' ears; I believe in the ears of the Deity: for it would announce the restitution to himself of so much of this great gift as has fallen to his people's share. It would bring glory to God, and the greatest benefit to our souls, if devotional music were heard habitually in every religious house, to whatever extent the means might be possessed; cultivated to that express end, very moderate talents might be made available. It would be no dishonor to the gospel, if every house in which it is professed could be known to the passenger by the frequency with which strains of devotional music were heard to issue from it. To wish that it were more cared for in places of public worship is superfluous: every one wishes the same: and where the power is in pious hands, the endeavor has not been wanting; it is a part of divine worship, that we feel ought to be more in the hands of the minister than it usually is, and more on his responsibility.

As a social enjoyment among religious people, the neglect of sacred music appears to me

quite extraordinary. Every Christian must, and every Christian does, prefer it to all other music: and as if God were determined in one sense to maintain his supremacy, and afford his people an opportunity of asserting it if they will, the finest compositions in the world are of a devotional character. But whether that we will not, or that we dare not, demand from the prince of this world his usurped possession, a very small concession, some solitary hymn perhaps, yielded cautiously and almost by stealth, is all that can be ventured in our musical evenings, with a feeling that even this is out of place. The praises of God should never be out of place on grateful lips from a believing heart: it is only His expulsion from his own world, that has made them inopportune anywhere. If Christians meet together to forget Him, if their mirth requires His absence, and their social affections refuse his participation, as in the world's society, then is his name mocked by such an introduction of it. If profane songs, or other sinful excitements, must be brought into our evening amusements, then is the admixture of God's word an improper one. But I cannot tell why an enjoyment so animating, so elevating and delightful, should not be expressly that for which we meet; the understood design of our social

entertainments. I cannot believe but that such assemblies might often claim the promise of his own especial presence in the midst, while they promoted sociability, and became a bond of spiritual union and affection. It is objected that sacred music does not suit mixed companies. There is a forbidden mixture which it certainly does not suit, unless to shame the incongruity. But it would rarely be offensive to the most worldly visitors of a religious house: and to invite their assistance in it, is no more objectionable than to admit the ungodly to our family prayers, or public ordinances, alike without feeling or interest to them. A beneficial influence might be exercised if those who, for music's sake, now make an ungodly compromise with the world, to meet, on neutral ground, were to say, "We have devoted our music to God; come and enjoy it with us in his name."

I have extended my remarks beyond what I intended; and still they are but desultory allusions to important things. I will add but two or three words relative to music as a solitary recreation. Without wishing to exclude all other compositions, I would suggest, to the young in particular, what I know to be true, because I feel it so: that different kinds of music have a different effect upon the mind, and give a differ-

ent tone to the spirits. Let them watch their own emotions to prove if it is not so. We know, if we be Christians, what tone of mind is happiest and safest in a world at enmity with God —with us if we be his children; where Satan is ever on the watch to whisper sin, and our own hearts ever ready to betray us; and we know what state of feeling best prepares us for earthly duties and heavenly communion. Whether we have recourse to music as a medicine to relieve our minds, or as an entertainment to refresh them, it is our wisdom to choose such as has the best influence on our feelings. This is a discretion which we exercise in reading, because we are fully sensible of the effect produced on the mind by what we read. It needs only a closer observation to perceive the same in music. If the result should seem to require a sacrifice, we may be assured it is one of habit rather than of taste, which will very soon cease to be a privation.

ON THE USE OF DANCING.

"God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good." When this conclusive sentence was pronounced, it included every mental and coporeal faculty with which the creature was endowed: every sense, every feeling, every appetite and inclination of the animal nature, as well as every intellectual endowment of the mind, and the still higher capacities of the immortal spirit. And as no one of these faculties was wastefully given, all had, and must have had, a legitimate occupation; there must have been to every power a corresponding means of exercise and gratification; and these, like itself, were included in the sentence: "Behold, it was very good." When I made this remark before, it led naturally to the question, whether it is still the case? whether there is still no faculty in man that cannot find a sinless exercise or an innocent enjoyment: which cannot be restored to its original design to promote the glory of God

and the happiness of man, and therefore must be relinquished? Admitting that the power of the Evil One is limited to the use and exercise of God's gifts, and cannot make evil the good gifts themselves; and admitting of course, that since he has no creative power, he cannot give a faculty to mind or a property to matter which it had not when it came "very good" from the Almighty hand: man fallen is still so different a creature from man in innocence; life in a corrupted world is so different a condition from the life of that pure Paradise, that there is no anomaly in supposing, apart from our experience of the fact, that some of those powers and properties may have become inapplicable to our condition, and be no longer capable of a safe and sinless exercise.

Whether man, in his first state of innocence and purity, could have any pleasure in dancing, is not worth inquiry: I suppose he might, and might have enjoyed it harmlessly. That there is something in it pleasurable to nature, I think is manifest from the universality of the practice: every people, from the most refined to the most savage and brutal, have some sort of measured exercise, or studied movement of the body, which is denominated dancing. It is equally not worth inquiry in what the gratifi-

cation consists: whether simply in the animation of the spirits and the exercise of the limbs; or whether in some satisfaction also to our perception of form, and time, and other combinations, which in music and painting we call harmony. Let it be admitted that there is some pleasure in dancing—apart from all from which it never can be parted, the adventitious excitements of time, and place, and company, in which it is performed: this I suppose will constitute "dancing in the abstract:" and of all the abstractions I ever heard of, I confess it is the most beyond my apprehension. The forest maiden sings as she walks over the lonely heath; and the captive princess may pass her nights in songs, for the pure love of music: but I doubt if turret tower or forest glade ever witnessed a *pas seul* for the pure love of dancing. If it should be so, however, I would not be understood to make the smallest doubt of its propriety; which is conceding all that can be desired for the harmlessness of dancing in the abstract.

It will be thought I write very gravely for so gay a subject, and proceed but heavily to so light an end. But we must bring the question within a smaller compass still, before it can be practically considered. The question, the real

practical question as it concerns the people of God, is not whether under any supposable circumstances, and in any state of society elsewhere existing, dancing is, or might be, a harmless recreation: we shall never learn our duties by generalities. It is simply this, whether in the position of a religious woman in society as now existing, she ever does, or can enjoy the recreation harmlessly. I do not hesitate to say she cannot. We may suppose a case, but it does not occur: we may imagine young people dancing at home for exercise, the useful interlude to graver occupations; the graceful expression of light-heartedness and mirth: but they never do so: even children will not do it unless it is forced upon them: nature is too honest for our purpose: they feel that the pleasure of dancing needs subsidiaries, and is not to be enjoyed without them. They are right. Exercise in a heated room is not the demand of healthful nature; studied and artificial movements, gravely and carefully performed, are not the freedom that the young spirits require. If it is a task, very well: if it is a recreation, they know that a walk or a game of play is better. But send for the company, light up the room, dress yourselves as becomes the occasion; now we shall see in every brightened

eye, the use of dancing—the delight of dancing —now the night will not be long enough to exhaust the pleasure, and doubtless we shall see next day the beneficial results of wholesome exercise and mental renovation!

How much talk a little honesty would save us! We know better. Every pious mother knows there is no opportunity for the enjoyment of dancing, as it is now practised, without an admixture of those pomps and vanities of the world which she has promised, on behalf of her children, to renounce, and for herself, has renounced in making a profession of godliness; without the risk of exciting those sinful thoughts and vain desires, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, which it is the work, the no easy work, of the Holy Spirit to subdue, and keep in subjection to the will of God: without encountering the spirit of darkness, in a state of mind the most unfitted for resistance. I have heard such a mother say, "It never did *me* any harm." Alas! how lightly do we think of sin. Is the memory of wasted hours no harm? The pride, the vanity, the thoughtlessness and prayerlessness of our young days, are they no burthen on the repentant soul? Can the renewed spirit look back upon the times when

God was forgotten, and Jesus was made to wait without, while the whole soul was absorbed in the pursuit of idols, engrossed with vanities and drunk with folly; and say they have done us no harm; because grace and mercy outstaid our carelessness; and that gracious Saviour grew not weary of waiting for our leisure? I know not what to think when I hear pardoned sinners thus speaking of the debts which they indeed have never paid: but which have been paid, most dearly paid, where not a single sin lay harmless on the heart that broke beneath the accumulated load; and if there was one wrong, that pierced that heart with an intenser anguish than every other, I can believe it was a sense of the lightness with which sin would be treated by those for whom he bore it; even by his own redeemed people.

It has been asserted in justification of the practice of dancing, that it is sanctioned by the mention of it in the Holy Scriptures. I will not be so disrespectful as to say this scarcely deserves an answer: our quarrel is not with the word, supposing it to be the word, which in the Old Testament, I believe it is not; we speak of dancing as it is practised in society at the present day, which alone constitutes the practical question of a Christian's duty. Does

any one in candor mean to say, that the word translated "dancing" in our Bibles, represents a similar amusement enjoyed under similar circumstances with those which now attend it? If so, I can only advise a reference to the passages that contain the word, with a good comment on the Hebrew text. In the New Testament the word is used but on three occasions. The example of Herodias' daughter, I suppose, will be willingly given up; the second reference is merely to a proverbial or figurative expression, "I have piped to you," &c.; the only remaining case is in the parable of the prodigal son. Can it be necessary to observe, that each particular circumstance of a parabolic story is not a moral sanction. No doubt, dancing was then, as it is now, a worldly amusement, resorted to in seasons of peculiar hilarity. An allusion to it as a figure of earthly festivity, is no more expressive of approbation, than when made to the fraud of a steward, or the iniquity of a judge. If this should be thought an unnecessary statement, indeed I should have thought so too, if this figurative allusion to dancing had not actually been produced to me as an argument in its favor.

"But you are fighting a shadow," some one will rejoin: "no pious person defends the

practice of dancing; no religious woman ever is or can be seen in a ball-room: it is as much opposed to her inclinations as it is to her profession, and therefore can need no such remonstrance. We are sure that our children, if they become religious women, will not have any taste for such amusements: it is not our prohibition that can detach their hearts from this world's pleasures. They must try them to know their emptiness: they will but long after the things that are forbidden, unless they have an opportunity of judging, and making experience of their vanity. When the grace of God takes possession of their hearts, it will detach them from all such pursuits." Thanks be to God, it will. But no thanks to you, if they enter upon that hard conflict, with earthly vanities in full possession of their hearts; with the habits, and tastes, and fashions of this world full upon them; if they have learned its language, and become familiarised with its offences, and been stamped to their heart's core with its false impressions and perverted images. It is not its emptiness or its sinfulness, that young people learn on their introduction to the pleasures of the world: it is their fitness to gratify a sinful nature—their suitability to the desires of a corrupted heart. As the child to whom

you present some food it has never seen before, will hesitate a moment, but, having cautiously tasted, devours it with all the relish of a newly-discovered treat, and ever after asks for it; so the young mind, on its first entrance into life, discovers the feast and the appetite together; a stranger hitherto to both, but never a stranger afterwards to the fitness of the one to gratify the other. It is not true that this world's pleasures have no zest, its pursuits no satisfaction, and its pride no charm. Satan's devices are not so ill-laid as that. There is, in places of public amusement, and in the gayer circles of society, all that can stimulate and gratify the passions and feelings of the natural heart. It is only when the cup has been drunk out, that it is found an empty one. It is full enough, and sweet enough, to the young lip that sips, for the first time, of the inebriating draught.

But we trust divine grace will bring our children out; will snatch them as brands from the fire, and sanctify them to himself, a holy and peculiar people. This is our professed hope; if we are sincere, it is our utmost, our only desire for the children of our love. And if He should, how little will those children have cause to thank their fathers for their unmeet preparation to it. Surely, if these

parents knew how the images of bygone things stay by the imagination when the heart rejects them—how they pursue us in our devotions, follow us to our knees, follow us to the very presence of our Maker—disturb our prayers, pollute our offerings, mix their unhallowed images with our visions of delight, and cross every sunbeam of heavenly consolation—surely they would spare to stain the young memory with one needless image of forbidden things. And how is it that they do not know? When I think of these things, I am at a loss. I ask myself, if it is possible that one believer's heart is so unlike another's, that the memory of folly should be no pain, and the habit of sin no fetter, and earthly associations no temptation. Can one bear the contact that another shrinks from? one make a jest of what fills another with remorse? Is it so easy a thing to some to put away the vanity of their minds, that it does not signify how long they have indulged it? so difficult to relapse, that nothing presents to them any serious temptation? I cannot tell; but when I hear some people speak with so much indifference of habits of earthliness, and vanity, and pride, so much uncertainty about the places and the things that foster and excite them; and think of the remembrance so griev-

ous, the burthen so intolerable, which these things leave on other hearts: I am forced to think there is a difference somewhere.

Our remarks have reached to an undesigned length; and there is more to say. The ground which most serious parents take, is that, not intending their children should make use of dancing as an amusement when they grow up, or be allowed an opportunity of doing so, there is yet no objection to the learning of it: they will not like it the more or the less for being taught. This is not true. The capability of doing a thing well, does increase the inclination for it; if it be a personal accomplishment, the wish for an occasion to exhibit it; and when the opportunity occurs, the temptation to make use of it. But I would rather lay the stress on the manifest dishonesty of the parent in thus acting. Dishonesty towards the child, to whose simple perceptions it exhibits a practical falsehood—viz. that dancing is at once right and wrong; wrong to be made use of when acquired, but right to be acquired at great effort and expense; a desirable accomplishment now, a sinful practice hereafter. No artless mind can reconcile these contradictions between the precepts of the parent and their practice. But above all, it is dishonest towards God; it is a

contradiction to our prayers, to our faith and trust on behalf of our children. We teach them to do what we rely upon his grace that they will not do, and lead them by a way in which they should not go, depending upon his Spirit to withdraw them. God may be better than his word; but he has made no such promise; he has not invited the parent to such a trust; nor attached a blessing to such a course; the promise which has been made is forfeited: "Bring up a child in the way that it should go, and when it is old it shall not depart from it." I think, besides, that every thing which a child is allowed to do contrary to the profession of godliness, until he come of age to take it upon himself, is a breach of the baptismal vow, on the part of the sureties who have made the profession for him. I need not remind the parent that a part of this vow is neither to follow nor be led by the vain pomp and glory of the world, its carnal or covetous desires.

No believer will venture to argue that any thing proved to be contrary to godliness, conducive to sin, and inconsistent with Christian principle, can be desirable, much less indispensable, to the temporal welfare of our children. I do not admit that dancing is necessary to the health or the figure, the grace or carriage of a

woman: but if it is, it does not signify; because these must all be sacrificed, if necessary, to the principle of conformity with the divine will: and when I recollect that the divine will is ever in accordance with the temporal as well as eternal benefit of the creature, I see it to be impossible that any thing prohibited should be necessary for the welfare of the body or the soul.

There is that to which this accomplishment is necessary. And this is the real predicament in which we stand; the source of all such difficulties and discrepancies. We have forgotten ourselves. We have forgotten that the Lord our God "assayed to go and take him a nation out of the midst of another nation," "that they might know that the Lord he is God, and there is none beside him:" and remain a separate people to himself for ever. We dream we are in Egypt still; obliged by its customs, conformed to its fashions, and subjected to its opinions: thence the endless conflict between the things that differ—things incompatible. We must be as much as possible like others: we must split a hair with principle, to avoid needless distinctions; we must do as others do, and be what others are, to the utmost point that we can stretch our conscience; and that our children after us may

do likewise, we must give them the same opportunities, the same advantages, as nearly as possible the same education, as other children: and all this is as systematically—I had almost said, as conscientiously done, as if the assigned position of the children of God, was to be as little different and as little distinguishable as possible from the nations of the earth, while they remain upon it. Was such the destiny of Israel, when, "because he loved their fathers, and chose their seed after them, he brought them out in his sight, with his mighty power out of Egypt?" Is it answerable to any description of the fold of Christ —the spiritual Israel, in the New Testament? But the world is Christian—things are altered now. Yes, they are altered: the city that stood once upon a hill, its battlements distinct against the brightened heavens, of which all that looked upon it, far or near, could say that that was it —like other cities in these peaceful times, has levelled its walls and built beyond its gates, and no one knows the boundary, or cares to guard the entrance. Who dreams of danger? doubtless the enemies have ceased from off the land. But has this peace been made by God or man. When is it dated, that we may look for the ratification in the word of God? Which passages in Scripture contain precepts for our guidance an-

ticipatory of such a change, or limit the acts of separation? I can find in all the Bible but one such time foreseen: when Christ shall reign over all: when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord: when the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the lion with the kid: and Satan shall be bound, that he may not deceive the nations any more.

ON THE USE OF HEARING.

It is the feeling of every heart that the times are peculiar and alarming: the solid earth seems, as it were, heaving beneath our feet, and its firmest fabrics reeling to and fro. The opinions, habits and prejudices of ages, like the broken mists of morning, are every where dispersing; disclosing to every eye the unveiled reality of things. Objects can no longer gain importance by obscurity, nor magnitude by imaginary distance. The factitious distinctions of society, useful as they have been, cannot abide this great disclosure, to hide their want of reality any longer; and even their utility will not serve them for a covering. Usurpation, oppression and corruption must now hear themselves called by their own names: all human influence and power submit to common inspection the title deeds of their supremacy. In a world so much accustomed to be governed by a

name, to be mastered by an idea, and overruled by fictions, fearful beyond description are the changes that must attend this great undoing: it is like taking away the huge buttresses and cumbrous pillars of some antique building, whence the spectators shrink away, and even the workmen tremble, in doubt whether the edifice will stand or fall. The hand that raised the social edifice alone knows the mighty secrets of its foundations; if it will stand without the adventitious props by which men have supported and, in a measure, disfigured it; or whether the time is come in which He designs that it shall fall to pieces and be left in ruins. The child of God has much to think and much to fear, in such a time as this; but I cannot believe that he has much to do with political manifestations. I cannot believe that he, at least, is to put his hand to the adventurous work, or mix his voice in the multitudinous cry. Well were it whispered in the ears of some who call themselves by the name of the Lord, "What dost thou here, Elijah—return on thy way to the wilderness—do the work of thy holy calling without fear; deliver my messages and anoint my chosen, and leave to me the care of my altars, and the maintenance of my covenant, the putting down of Ahab and the setting up of Jehu.

Still less can Christian women have to do in the noisy current of this world's politics, except by that unperceived but commonly irresistible influence, which animates or discourages the active spirit of man. And whatever be the case in a world beyond our reach, I am happy in believing that amongst religious women, no remonstrance is required upon the subject; to the extent of my observation all is as it should be; the weight of female influence in the religious circles is all on the side of quietness and confidence, submission to the things that are, and divine reliance for whatever is to come.

More deeply interesting still to every Christian bosom, is the condition of the church of God; little less agitated, and perhaps nothing less alarming, than that of society at large. In the externals of religion, in all that is human in it, the church shares fully the political revolution. Names no longer carry weight; creeds and formularies, and conventional usages, are losing all authority; the learner is the critic, and the teacher not seldom the candidate: every one must now have a better reason for a thing than that his minister says it, or his church enacts it, or his forefathers had it so. With the superstitions and formalities, the im-

positions and corruptions, which will not be able to confront the matter-of-fact tribunal of the present day, how much will be sacrificed that is important to religion, although extraneous to it, is also the secret of Omniscience: how far the interests of the church of Christ will be affected by the maintenance or destruction of any, or of all ecclesiastical establishments, we may have our opinions, and must have our fears, but it is only God that knows. And again we may surely say to every believing soul, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Let us beware how we answer, "No—but we will flee upon chariots and upon horses," or we will turn round and fight our enemies with the weapons of this world's warfare. By the church of Christ, I mean rather that fold invisible, that inclosure so obscure to mortal vision, but to the omniscient eye so definite, which is neither within the establishment nor without it; which can be designated by no name of man's inventing, nor entrenched by any lines of human circumvallation: which is wherever a true believer is, a living member of Christ's mystical body upon earth, and is not any where beside. Respecting the state of the true church at the present time, there is much difference of opinion. Some think it is spread-

ing like a green bay-tree planted by the water courses, extending its roots throughout the earth, and about to overshadow the whole human race: they see nothing but promise in the extension of knowledge and the spirit of inquiry, and the increase of religious profession and exertion. Some, on the other hand, take all this seeming good for evil, think vital godliness is on the decline, its spirit lowered by diffusion and tainted by admixture; that the religion of Jesus, instead of being the growing leaven of a Christianised world, is about to be again cast out and persecuted by the confederate powers of darkness. I do not wish to decide between these opposite opinions; every attentive listener must be impressed with the discrepancy, even in the language of our pulpits: I have sometimes thought of the same pulpit: as if there was a more than ordinary confusion in the minds of pious men, as to what our real condition is. God has his purpose in all: and when his children can no longer see their way, it is their time to stand still and see what the Lord will do. Let the future be his: my observations respect only the present, the tangible, perceptible present; that which we all can see, and all can do, and all are responsible to do aright.

It cannot be denied, I think, that in our church, at the present time, although there is an increase of light in respect of its diffusion, there is a diminution in its intenseness. The few bright lights of other days, that fixed all eyes and drew a charmed circle round them, into which nothing profane might enter; where the world came not in, because there was nothing to allure them, and the church went not out, because the world refused them; these brilliant candlesticks of a despised altar have given place to an indefinite number of lights almost as indefinite: while our spiritual teachers are multiplied on every side, the learner has rather to find his way through them than by them, so indistinct and various are their indications; and while the true disciples of Jesus are multiplied also, the profession of religion has become so indefinite a thing, that if He is stil known of his sheep, as undoubtedly He must be, it is of Him only they can be distinctly known.

Whether this condition of the church is a better or a worse one, or why, or for what end God has been pleased to bring us to it; whether it is a token of his grace for gifts improved, or of displeasure for those gifts neglected, I can-

not take upon me to decide: our opportunities have been unexampled, our advantages over all other nations incalculable: great, indeed, must have been our improvement of them, to bring us to the former conclusion: in contemplation of our duties at the present crisis, it may be as well to keep our minds in suspense at least upon this point, lest we grow supine in too much admiration of our condition.

Be all this as it may, the fact is so, that while the number of Gospel ministers is greatly increased, and the preaching of the truth so much extended, the difficulties of those who desire to hear it were never greater than at present. Time was when we had only to choose whether we would hear an evangelical preacher, or whether we would not; and if we would, the term had so definite a signification, with some differences equally well defined, that in choosing it we knew what manner of doctrine we should hear, and might fearlessly commit ourselves to its influence. Not so now. As a class, evangelical preachers are no longer distinct and no longer uniform: of some of the most distinguished every one has a doctrine, an interpretation, perhaps even a revelation of his own: or he has a particular sort of congregation to be suited; or he has a congregation so com-

pounded that nothing can suit it but the compromise of plain gospel truth, in an attempt to unite what God has for ever separated. Thus the humble, simple, and earnest inquirer, be his heart as single as it may in the selection, is at the risk of being preached to stone by guarded and diluted exhibitions of the truth, or spirited away to the regions of fancy, by speculative theory. Never was there a period in which it was so necessary to every one of us to take heed what we hear, what we take our children to hear, and send our servants to hear; and what is said of hearing, is equally true of reading. We know what is called Calvinism, and what Arminianism: we know what is meant by church and by dissent, by high church and low church. It is said that names are invidious: and whether from a real enlargement of mind, or by a peculiar operation of the spirit of equality which is determined to rid itself of all distinctions, there is a growing disposition to say that names either mean nothing, or that they mean something which does not signify. It may be so: but there are so many things without names at this moment polluting the pure streams of truth, I could wish there was something by which to call them, though even prejudice had been the sponsor. There are

those who teach Socinianism without being Socinians—who instil popery without being papists—who make common cause with the mammon of unrighteousness without being its servants: and not exactly denying any truth, or advocating any sin, do so obscure the doctrines and liberalise the practice of the gospel, that the religion of Jesus Christ can be no longer recognised.

As women, not guiltless of the cause, we are of all people the most exposed to the consequences of these things. On the former point, I feel all the embarrassment of my subject—I cannot say what I would. Female influence is no new discovery; and human weakness is of ancient date. What the approbation of the drawing-room has to do with the deliberations of the cabinet and the movements of the camp, is better known to some than it were good to be to all. And if on the one hand the operation of divine grace might be supposed a defence against this influence, there is on the other hand a peculiar exposure to it by the sort of intercourse which takes place between a minister and the female disciples of his ministry. It has happened to me to see the beginning, and to watch the growth of more than one extravagance, and while I have seen female

susceptibility gathering stimulants from masculine intellect, and the most gifted of men seeking their proselytes among the very weakest of women, I have felt occasion to ask myself which is the misled, and which the misleader—who is in most danger of seduction from the simplicity of the gospel;—the flattered idol, or the excited worshippers? For it is not common things, nor plain things, nor old things, that excited extraordinary attention, still less maintain it: the cup must be spiced afresh for each day's draught, or it will quickly pall. The first step in error taken, the first novel notion ventured and successful, the temptation to proceed is almost irresistible? novelty in religion is truly that intoxicating cup which can more easily be abstained from than restricted. In the language of political economy, the demand produces the supply: if it be so in things spiritual, women are abundantly guilty of the present distraction of the Church of Christ.

If implicated in the cause, how deeply are we affected by the consequences. More quick to receive than clear to discriminate, more eager in pursuit than firm upon our standing, more fearful of wrong, than skilful to detect it, women are peculiarly liable to suffer, in faith and practice, by obscurity or confusion in the

lights around them; to lose their way, or sit down in discouragement. Could those teachers who experiment upon established principles, prescriptive duties, and received interpretations, know the effect of their "curious questions" upon the undecided, the unstable, the ignorant, and the timid, they would lay their intellects in the dust rather than exercise them in so dangerous a sport. Much we could say upon this subject; but our words are not for them. To our female friends we say, At this time, above all times, take heed what you hear.

Too restless a curiosity to hear every thing, to wander from place to place, particularly to follow the tide of popularity, and make ourselves acquainted with whatever is talked about, although the distinction be acknowledged error, has no doubt been a danger predominant among us, and a most fruitful source of evil. By the reaction so natural to human weakness, from conviction of evil on the one hand, falling into danger on the opposite, I feel there is now some disposition among religious people to become careless about the ministry they attend; to leave it to be determined by convenience, or locality, or whatever else; and provided, as they say, the preacher is a good man, to consider it of no consequence whether themselves or their

families derive any benefit from his instruction; whether they hear the doctrines of the gospel in fulness and purity, or whether it be partially suppressed, inadequately exhibited, or mixed up with the wild imaginings of human fancy. I am afraid this indifference will prove the greater evil. To God nothing signifies: all instruments are equal, and means are only important as He makes them so: but He *has* made them so; in spiritual as well as natural things, effects follow their causes with a regularity far more indicative of his providing wisdom than arbitrary interferences would be: and since it has pleased the divine sovereignty to manifest itself in the use of means rather than in contempt of them, to man every thing signifies. The atmosphere we live in, and the food we eat, do not more certainly affect our body's health, than the ministry we attend and the books we read, give the tone to our religion: we are often not sensible of the former, but by the effect; nor always, when suffering, conscious of the cause: so may it be in the latter: it is often insensibly that we grow cold in our affections, undecided in our views, lax in our principles, and careless in our conversation: that we become indifferent to what is essential, or occupied with what is trifling; exalted with

notions or cast down with uncertainties. The rock of ages glides from beneath our feet; the simplicity of our trust is gone, and the foundation of our hopes obscured, while we are scarcely conscious of the movement. And second only to the influence on ourselves, is the effect of our indifference upon others. If approving a form of worship, we are indifferent to the use of it, and professing certain opinions, are unconcerned about the preaching of them, an air of fiction is thrown over our religion, which is very soon observed by those whom it suits to believe that distinctions do not signify, and that one way of thinking is as good as another. In an age when liberalism is the overwhelming torrent that threatens to bear down all principle and prejudice together, it becomes every one who attaches any value to anything, by every step they take and every word they speak to manifest their principles and opinions. By thus standing still, when all beside is in motion; distinct and firm when all beside is in confusion, the church of Christ can alone continue to give light to the distracted world.

And take heed *how* you hear. It is the preaching signifies, and not the preacher: we go to hear the word, and not the minister, and should estimate the sermon by its intrinsic

worth, not by the mouth from whence it comes. I cannot join in the rather common assertion, that it does not signify in what manner the gospel is set forth; provided it be the gospel; it is our own fault if we are not profited in hearing. I know that it signifies what we eat and drink, even of things good and wholesome in themselves, and is no fault of our appetite if we remain unnourished: I believe the analogy is perfect, when the desire is single; when there is as honest a desire for spiritual sustenance as there is for the support of our animal nature; and I believe we ought to do in the one case what we should do in the other—to take of God's manifold provision that which we find best for us. I would rather say, it does not signify *whom* we hear. It is the preference for *persons*, that has been and is, so fruitful a source of evil; that has brought so much party spirit into the community of Christ, and divides into cliques every religious neighborhood. Who is Paul, and who is Apollos? In this personal and individual preference, it is not the minister of God who is valued for his office' sake, or for the truth's sake that he administers: it is not the unction of his words or the clearness of his doctrines that determines our adherence—it is himself. The moment this takes place, and it may take place

very unconsciously to ourselves, we begin to hear the preacher, not the sermon; we begin to value the minister, not the word, and to measure the thing spoken by his merits, not by its own. Party spirit is the first, but far from the last, evil that ensues. It would be painful, perhaps it would not be good, to expose to the utmost the folly, the extravagance, the errors, and improprieties that have been the extreme issue of this small beginning; but in every step of the way it is most deeply injurious to both parties. The minister is very strong who is neither hurried forward to excess, nor held back and shackled by the embrace of partiality so gratifying to his best desires, as well as flattering to his weaker nature. To the other party, I think the ill effects may be traced on every side; it will be better that each one of us should try if we can trace any portion of them in ourselves.

ON THE USE OF ORDINANCES.

Few things are of more importance to the advancement of the Christian character, than a close examination of those thoughts and opinions which have come into the mind, we know not how, and continue to abide there only because their right to do so has never been questioned. Such an examination is only the more necessary, if the opinions be of that class of established certainties which are universally repeated; not because every one thinks alike upon them, but because they have passed as admitted truths, without being thought upon at all. Those who are not well acquainted with human nature, are little aware how much of mere habit there is in our thoughts and feelings, as well as in our actions. Upon one of these habitual certainties, which seems to me to be taken too much for granted, even among the more serious members of the Established Church, I have a few remarks

to make; not as dogmatical positions, which nobody can dispute, but as suggestions worthy of attention, which all are welcome to refute if they can do so, by the word of God, or the testimony of his Spirit.

The question that is in my mind is this—Whether the prayers or the sermon is the most important part of the public service of our church? Every body says it is the prayers. But how do they know it is? I am sure we do not *feel* it so; but then we say we ought. How do we know we ought? Because it is so, *of course.* Nay! but the course of this world, the current of men's unsanctified opinions, has been always to the wrong; prone, at the best, to run counter to the mind of God. It will be answered that prayer, as a means of salvation, and for the sustenance of spiritual life, is of more consequence than preaching. No doubt it is; because the divine life can be sustained in the soul without the one;—without the other, it cannot. We have many ways of communication from God, besides the preacher's voice. He has no way of communication from us, but by our prayers. The preacher may speak in vain; the words of heartfelt believing prayer have never been spoken in vain. One is but an aliment appointed for the support of spiritual

life; the other is the very breathing of that life itself, without which the food would be administered in vain. But this is not the question. We do not ask whether the soul would prosper better that never heard preaching, or that never prayed; whether prayer or preaching are of the most importance in the abstract;—but whether, to a church assembled at an appointed time, in an appointed place, for public service and instruction, the prayers there dictated by the minister, and repeated by the congregation, are the only important or the most important object of their assembling?

In endeavoring to solve this doubt by the Holy Scriptures, I find but little that speaks directly to the point, but much that bears upon it. I am not aware that there is more than one direct command for the assembling together of the church in the New Testament, namely, Heb. x. 25, where it is expressly said to be for the purpose of exhortation. The custom of the disciples, under the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, supplies the place of precept. In all the instances given, as I believe, of their being so assembled, the preaching of the apostles, with its effect, forms the prominent part of the relation; accompanied of course by prayer. See Acts ii, and iii. By Acts xiii, it distinctly ap-

pears, that in the congregation of the people on the Sabbath-day, was the customary time for preaching; since, having heard Paul on one such occasion, they desired to hear him again "on the next Sabbath." Even the more general exhortations to prayer, not designating whether private or congregational, are frequently accompanied with an immediate allusion to preaching, as if they were always connected in the mind of the inspired writer; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3. And it was upon, or after preaching, that the great manifestations of the Spirit were made, to the conversion of many.

We refer to the promises. The expectations of men are very apt to run counter to the promises of God, as to the channels in which his grace will flow. The scriptures say, "that faith cometh by hearing; and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. x. They say it is by the foolishness of preaching that "God will save them that believe." 1 Cor. i. 21. To preach was the great commission, so many times repeated by our Lord to his disciples, for the conversion of the world; to which he most directly promises his accompanying Spirit. Yet men commonly affect to think the preaching of the gospel of very little moment, while they

expect from baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other divine ordinances, almost supernatural effects; which God in his word has certainly not attached to them, though He instituted them, and blessed them, and continually diffuses his Holy Spirit through them.

To descend from the greater authority to the less, our own church certainly does not place the value of preaching so low as do some of her members. When she gives it among the first instructions to the sponsors of the baptised child, that they shall "call upon him to hear sermons," it cannot be meant that they should tell him, as I have heard children told, that it does not signify what the sermon is; we go to church, or rather ought to go—for the appeal to fact will seldom hold good—for the sake of the prayers. Every one conversant with ecclesiastical history must be aware, that neglect of preaching has always marked the declension of the churches. In the Romish church preaching is comparatively rare; and the eagerness of protestants to hear sermons, and to select good preachers, has always been a subject of ridicule with them; while, in attendance upon public ministrations, they are more exact than we are. In the lowest and most corrupted state of the church of England, that of the two reigns pre-

ceding the Commonwealth, preaching was almost discontinued in the Sabbath service; the attempt to revive it by the puritans was the first signal for opposition and opprobrium. Even *we* may remember when the tone of religion, in the establishment, was very different from that which now pervades it. One sermon of ten minutes' length on the Sunday was then considered quite long enough for polite ears. On the other hand, every revival of religion in the churches has been marked by increase of zeal in the ministry, and taste in the people for the exhibition of the gospel in the pulpit; at once the cause and the consequence of the outpouring of the Spirit. Wherever there has been earnest, faithful, and assiduous preaching, the effects of God's accompanying Spirit have been seen; while from the mere performance of the service, and the administration of ordinances, *unaccompanied* by gospel sermons, I am not aware that such results have at any time been witnessed.

Our mistake, if it is one, is of the greatest consequence; for it follows of course that if the sermon is not an important part of the service, it does not signify what sermon we hear, the prayers being always the same. In this persuasion many an unawakened spirit has slept the sleep of death,

and never heard the Gospel's gladdening sound. In the regenerated heart, most happily, truth is too strong for fiction; feeling is too strong for convention; and the Spirit within us eventually breaks through the shackles which the world has bound about us. The hunger of the awakened soul becomes too importunate to be stayed with names, and the parish boundary grows indistinct as the heavenly vision opens. But persuading ourselves that we *ought* not to attach so much importance to the sermon as we begin to feel we do, the divine impulse is resisted, and the healthful appetite is refused the aliment especially appointed for its sustenance. Or it is fed sparingly, uncertainly, and as it were by stealth, with a thousand misgivings lest we be doing wrong. We will hear a good preacher in the week-day, or the Sabbath evening, as an indulgence; but it is not necessary; we must still make the prayers our object. Meantime the soul is famished; and as the ascetic of other days looked with complacency on his shrivelled limbs, and called his abstinence self-denial; so do we upon the lifeless, joyless, inanity into which the spirit sinks, for want of the nourishment we believe it our duty to abstain from. If it is our duty, well: God will supply by other means, whatever his law or his providence withholds:

but if, when he spreads a table, we will not sit at it; when he scatters manna round our tents, we will not go out to gather it, because it is not in the right place, or not in the right company; because we think that we can do without it, or that what man provides is better; God must not be expected to come out of his place to administer to our need. Of what immense importance, then, is it, to be assured whether this established maxim be right or wrong.

Inclination will not always be on the side of spiritual things, overborne with difficulty by a sense of duty. It is true, the regenerated soul does always like, and must like, the sound of the Gospel, and the preaching of the truth: but alas! in our imperfect hearts, there are many other loves beside the love of truth. There is the love of ease, and the love of approbation, and the taste for scenery, and the taste for society: and the time may come, and does come, when these must be sacrificed, or the preaching of the Gospel be dispensed with. Then the established maxim comes in on nature's side. It is a great privation, certainly, to be without a Gospel ministry; but it is not essential: the prayers are the same, and the prayers are the important part of the service. Our servants—for whose spiritual sustenance, as far as depends on us, we are as

responsible as for their daily bread—and our children, whom we are pledged to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—we take them where we know they learn nothing, retain nothing, from the sermon; and where, perhaps, if they retained all they hear from the pulpit, it would not be truth enough to save their souls. But it suits our convenience—they hear nothing *bad*—and there is the church service, which is "all that signifies." And thus, in the choice of our residence, in the selection of a place of worship, in our family arrangements from Sabbath to Sabbath, that which should take precedence of every other consideration, the invigoration of the divine life within us, by means that God has especially appointed for that end, and the welfare of the souls committed to our guidance, are postponed to a thousand considerations of earthly interest and convenience; as if it were the most indifferent of all things; a mere gratification which it is meritorious to forego; and every misgiving of the heart is silenced by the undisputed assertion, that "we ought to go to church to pray and not to hear." Is it not time to examine on what that opinion is founded?

ON THE USE OF READING.

It cannot, I suppose, be doubted, that reading is the most powerful instrument in existence for good or evil. It is that which God himself has made use of in the revelation of his will. A book is the medium of communication, with his creatures which He has chosen; all previous methods having tended to its completion and been merged in it when completed. The faculty or combination of faculties, thus peculiarly marked with the divine authority, and consecrated to so high a purpose, is not only placed beyond all doubt as to its utility, but attains the character of a common duty and a common right. We feel that every man should be able to read, and, by the common claims of humanity, should have an opportunity afforded him to learn. We may justly say it is the will of God that man should read. But where have we a faculty so

much misused, a power so preverted to the uses of iniquity? What sin, what vice is there, that books have not disseminated! What evil have they not encouraged, and sin and misery produced? We may well believe that when the great enemy of man took notice of the act of God, to make a book the instrument of greatest good, he also chose it for his chief instrument of evil. Not one book—for then we should have remarked his work; but by possessing himself of a faculty of which the influence would be unlimited over the minds of men. I am persuaded that as far as the power of reading is in exercis , which is every day increasing, and already extended beyond all former experience, neither precept, nor habit, nor example, have an influence so powerful on the character as the books we read, or does so much give the tone to our thoughts and feelings. Of course the impress is the most easily taken, and is perhaps the most permanent, while the character is unformed and untempered by experience: and minds of greater or less pliability offer different degrees of resistance to this influence: but the e is no age at which it ceases, and no character entirely beyond its reac : I believe there is no time at which it does not

signify that we read; still admitting the greatest degree of difference between the young and the old, the wise and the simple.

A peculiar feature of the present time is the inconsiderateness with which books are written and published to the world. It savors, no doubt, of the general character of the age, this age of equality and universal suffrage, in which every man is to be fit for every thing, and setting aside all mental and circumstantial differences, take upon himself to remove the Creator's land-marks, and level all distinctions among his creatures. The aristocracy of literature is in the same predicament, as that of rank and wealth: all will legislate, and all will write. In respect of talent, this is a most harmless sort of republicanism: it creates a supply, not only adequate in quantity, but suitable in kind, to the demands of this book-consuming age. Works too superficial for the studious, too inaccurate for the learned, and too frivolous for the thoughtful, have a reading world to which they are adapted, and through which they circulate no inconsiderable measure of useful knowledge and rational amusement. Clothed in purple and fine linen, we should be as wise to doubt the utility of frieze and fustian, as to decry at this time the rapid production

of inferior books. Those good old days, when men thought before they wrote, and knew before they taught—those days of hour glasses and night-lamps, and huge leathern folios, which sages sigh at the remembrance of, are the loss of the few at the demand of the many—a mere despoiling of the privileged classes, under the radical influence of blue ink and steel pens, monthly magazines and quarterly reviews. Beautiful, in every step of its progress, is the development of the Almighty's purpose; and who but must see that it is working now in no ordinary manner? The eye of taste and feeling looks with delight upon the morning—the golden sky, the deeply-colored clouds, the magnifying obscurity that ennobles some, while it veils more vulgar objects, or clothes with fictitious tints the little it discloses—and sees with reluctance the diminution of beauty as the morning grows, the gradual dissipation of the charm before the opening day; the colorless clouds, the cold gray landscape, a thousand vulgar and unsightly objects discoverable by day-light. Thus the time seems coming upon the world when nothing shall pass for anything but what it is—when things most base will not hide themselves any longer, and things factitious must meet the light of truth. We do not like

it; but it must be so. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand;" God has his own disclosures now to make, and Satan grows impatient of disguise because his time is short. Instead of repining for the stronger lights and shades of by-gone days, we must see to walk as children of the light, in the exercise of such discernment as the times require; they do require, from Christians in particular, the nicest discrimination: shall I not say above all from Christian women? We, more than any one, have been gainers by the change before spoken of; from infancy to age the whole character of a woman's reading has been revolutionised, and great indeed has been the gain, since we took our school-room degrees upon Mrs. Chapone's religion, and Madame Genlis' morality, and pursued our studies among the tattered stock-books of a country library, with Blair's Sermons for Sunday reading, and Sturm's Reflections for our daily bread. Every branch of study has been brought within our reach, adapted to every age and capacity, and made accessible in almost every place and circumstance of life. I have said that in one sense the increase of writers is a great public benefit. But Satan knows his time. Since the darkness of ignorance avails him no longer, he makes use

of the very influx of the light, to blind the eyes and confuse the intellects of men. On general subjects the multiplication of inferior books is a benefit, because they all communicate a considerable measure of real knowledge, and the mistakes and insufficiencies do no harm. Not so when they bear upon religion; when the truths of God are to be tampered with, imperfectly exhibited, ignorantly mis-stated, or partially obscured. In religion the inconsiderateness with which books are published is a most awful character of the times. The mischief is incalculable; it might seem harsh to say who is the great instigator of it—but certain it is, that pious men are very often the instruments, while the young, the devoted, the unsuspicious are the most certain victims. Job wished his enemy had written a book, because that which is written remains; cannot be recalled; cannot be evaded or denied; stands exposed to the scrutiny of time and truth, and must abide the shame of the detection. Job would scarcely escape this satisfaction now. The merest child in faith, just born anew into the spiritual world, does not hesitate to write, and publish too, against the most established truths. Does the fresh student of divinity but catch a glimpse of something he never saw before, the world need

not wait for the discovery till he has looked again: it matters not what novelty, what error, or what delusion seizes upon the mind, the press is ready; it must be published first, and examined and retracted at our leisure. Who thinks of the indelible, ineffaceable characters of a printed book, or how many may take the poison that will never take the antidote? or how many those rash words will lead astray, when he who writes them has repented and been forgiven? Who cares through what far year the stumbling-block may lie upon the path of life, and many a simple one break his peace upon it, when he who put it there is gone to heaven? There are men, distinguished men, must we not say pious men—amongst us, who publish altered opinions every year, and take no shame, and feel no penitence for the mischief they have done! Do they indeed know it? Must we take them for no wiser and no worse than idle children, who amuse themselves with muddying the pure water-springs, thoughtless of any harm to those that drink? My object is the reader, not the writers, of religious books; but readers may be writers too, and I would only say to such a one—It is a serious thing to write a book, a pamphlet, an article, in a religious magazine. Suppose there be error in it—it

goes where you have never been, and will remain when you have ceased to be. It goes to the sick female on her bed of pain, and breaks the little peace her prayers have gained: no one is near to tell her it is not true. It reaches the widowed and the broken-hearted, and blots the texts on which their souls are stayed; they cannot try the value of your criticism. It crosses the afflicted while the storm is raging, and takes them to shelter under a falling roof; no moment for them to look to the foundations. It meets the awakening soul's first cry for help, answers it with fictions, and feeds it upon ashes; no time for them to discriminate and refuse it. It steals into the dwelling of domestic love, and fills it with discord and dissension. It stirs the docile spirit against its teachers, and lures the little ones from the shepherd's arms. It is a pestilent wind in God's own garden, dropping mildew on the fairest fruits. You cannot help this; you are sincere in your persuasions, and must propagate the truth. The truth! you never thought of it till yesterday—you will have changed your mind to-morrow. Rather wait till years of trial have put your discovery to proof—till hours of study, and days and nights of prayer have given fixedness and stability to

your opinions: wait at least till your experience bears some proportion to that of the saints before you, from whose track you are turning the footsteps of the simple. "Ye did run well; who hath hindered you?" What names of earth might be answered to that question? "I would," says the apostle, "that they were even cut off which trouble you." Seeing what I have seen of the consequences of such presumptuous and precipitous writing, sooner should my right hand forget its cunning, than I would give publicity to a novel opinion, a peculiar doctrine, or a new interpretation of Scripture, until years of examination, thought and prayer, had given the weight of experience to the vanity of newness.

All do not feel this; and we can only repeat our warning—"Take heed what you read." Whatever was said in a former paper, respecting the hearing of the Gospel, might justly be repeated here. There is such a thing as an ungodly curiosity in religion—a desire to look into error *as such;* I mean with a full persuasion that it is error: a pursuit for which the love of truth cannot be pleaded as an excuse. No doubt there are those whose duty it is to examine error, they that may refute it, and defend the weak against its inroads. So is it

the duty of the physician to brave an infected atmosphere, and watch the symptoms of the fever or the cholera; but who runs after him thither for the mere purpose of seeing what is the matter? They had better do it—the young, the unstable, and the simple minded, had far better go there, where they can but kill the body, than expose themselves to the influence of every adventurous writer on religion, whose novelties will ruin their spiritual health, if not eternally destroy their souls.

Unhappily, and most perilously at the present day, beside what is imprudently examined as error, there is a great deal of reading in which truth is honestly sought, whilst error is unconsciously imbibed. The levelling tide has here worked us mischief indeed, bearing down every landmark by which the steps of the ignorant might be guided. The character of the author, the popularity of his writings, the church that he belongs to, or the creed that he subscribes, no longer proves anything as to the tendency of his doctrine, and the spiritual influence of his book. In giving warning of the danger, we feel, fully feel, that we can set no buoy upon the rock to tell with certainty where it is: we are truly here among the shifting sands that mariners so much dread. If we may continue

our nautical illustration, we should say to the inexperienced, avoid the straits and keep the open sea. Read the works on which your fathers fed, and lived in righteousness, and died in joy. Choose the books in which there is nothing new, nothing to turn you from the beaten path, but all to hasten your advance upon it. Be suspicious even of new words, if they affect to designate old things, and there be no Scripture warrant for the change. Above all things give heed to the *manner* of the artist, what objects fill the foreground of the picture —this, if we had skill enough, would always guide us right. If the great, the vital, the established truths of the Gospel be not the most prominently and immediately visible, it is no canvass for the inexperienced eye to gaze upon, whatever be its beauty. If Christ, the author and finisher of our salvation—his Deity, involving and involved in his atonement—Christ crucified, the stone of stumbling to which human reason never will be reconciled, exposed in all its bare offensiveness, and the Spirit's work, inseparable from it, but subordinated to it, because it is that very Spirit's work to testify of Christ: if these have to be sought for in the misty background of the picture, while a host of disputable figures occupy its front,

false in their magnitude if in nothing else; it is no safe study for the learner's eye—turn at once away, it will lead farther than you see, or perhaps than the writer sees at present—reason and taste now only veil the cross to make it less obtrusive—presently they will bury it quite out of sight.

I have one class of books particularly, though not exclusively in my mind, which are multiplying upon us fearfully—a half Christian, half Socinian race—a sort of reasoning, philosophizing Gospel, of which, as far as it prevails, it may well be said "Then is the offence of the cross ceased:" the world is delighted with them, and so I can believe the prince of this world is; but the acceptance they have found among the followers of Him whose glory they have veiled, is indeed a fearful and affecting wonder. Their wide circulation is no matter for surprise; it is referable to the cause before alluded to; a supply is required for a new demand. It is not the pious only, or the well-instructed in the truth of God, who now require religious books: every body reads religious books: but every body does not want the full gospel in them. There is a very large class of persons who have found or made a path between the broad road that leadeth to de-

struction and the narrow path that leads to eternal life: they want, as well they may, a medium truth, between the inflexible doctrines of the cross, as taught and walked in by those who have separated themselves, and that doctrinal indifference which leaves every man to walk by the light of his own conscience. They must have a measure of evangelical truth—they must have a Christ. What can unbelief demand, that Satan will not devise to keep it satisfied, short of the full knowledge of the truth; the full exhibition of the son of God, the Saviour of mankind?

"Touch not, taste not, handle not." The provision of this neutral ground is no more safe for the Christian than its atmosphere. I do not say he cannot feed upon it, because there is much in these writings that is good and pleasant to the taste; but I am sure he cannot be in health upon it: his appetite will be vitiated and his spirit sickened, at once from want and disrelish of more strong and simple truth. Above all, let such as are strong in the faith, take heed how they circulate such books among the weak and undiscerning.

A WORD TO WOMEN.

God himself has decided, that the thing which *cannot* consist with his holy service is the service of Mammon: that the two passions which *cannot* subsist in the same bosom, are the love of God, and the love of this world. Against such authority, we must not admit they can be reigning together in peaceable possession of one heart. We may see them, indeed, and we may feel them, making bitter war against each other's mastery, and pledged to mortal conflict; but we must not think we see them in another's bosom, or our own, sitting side by side in amicable union of their power. On the word of God, it is impossible.

As far as the mammon of this world is confined to the desire of getting money, females are very little exposed to its influence; and, perhaps, any remonstrance upon the subject may seem to come rather ill from us, who are

so little experienced in the temptation. But I have often thought women are not sufficiently aware, or not sufficiently mindful, of the extent to which they are the occasion of a sin they are spared the commission of: how deeply they are guilty of their fathers' and their husbands' condemnation in this particular. What goads on the tradesman or the merchant to increase his income; or if he cannot increase it, to outlive it to his ruin? It is not he, for the most part, who drives in the carriage, or enjoys the mansion. Sometimes it is his pride that seeks the elevation of his family; and pride is within the reach of female influence to animate or discourage: but much oftener it is his affectionate indulgence, that loves to gratify his wife and children with a thousand superfluities. It is because he hears at home that his establishment must be increased, and the expense of his children's education cannot be restricted: they must dress, they must associate, they must learn. He does not tell them, in return—it would be better if he did—how many anxious hours he endures, how many doubtful speculations he engages in, to meet these *necessities;* or if it be short of that how his thoughts are engrossed, and his soul pre-occupied; when, if a less income

would suffice, he might have found opportunity for prayer, and room for God. Many a parent's heart need not have broken, many a tender family need not have been destitute, if, on the first symptom of declension in his affairs, or diminution in his profits, the husband had had the courage to require from his family the relinquishment of their superfluities. And why had he not? but because he knew their hearts were set upon them; their happiness was in them; the privation of luxuries and expenses they were accustomed to, would be an infliction of pain and sorrow, which he determines to postpone, in hope of better days. How differently would his fond heart beat at such a time—aye, or his proud heart, if it should be so,—had he reason to believe that his wife and daughters did not want these vanities; that these superfluities were their playthings, not their bliss—that they dressed themselves, and dressed their houses, and dressed their tables to meet his wishes, and become his station: but attaching no importance to either. And if he knew this when he is getting money, as well as when he is losing it, Mammon would lose his strongest hold on many a generous bosom. The hours of toil would be abridged, the cankering anxiety would be stayed, and ambition

itself be made ashamed. None but the most sordid spirits will covet wealth that nobody values, and vanities that nobody cares for. Yet many a woman, must I say Christian woman, sees her husband's health endangered, his peace of mind disturbed, and, above all, his spiritual interests neglected, for the acquisition of this world's good; and never lets him see that she loathes the trumpery which deprives her of her intercourse with him, and him of his intercourse with God.

AMEN.

Should a learned divine from Mexico or Japan, if any such there are, ignorant of our language, and a stranger to our religion, enter by chance some place of worship during divine service—supposing him always to be a profound thinker—it appears to me, there is one circumstance that would very much puzzle him; and I scarcely see to what possible conclusion his uninstructed philosoply could bring him, when he should hear the devout tones of the minister, and the solemn responses of the people, which, without understanding the words, he could not fail to perceive were devotional, interrupted every few minutes by the heartless discordant shout which constitutes the *Amen* in most of our public assemblies. A part of the devotion he certainly could not think it, from the tone of unconcern in which it is uttered, if uttered at all, by the greater part of the congregation:

while the peculiar loudness of the reverberation, from the clerk to the charity school, would make it appear to be a ceremony of no ordinary importance.

The thoughts of a Japanese doctor do not signify; and perhaps it does not signify, that the few persons whom custom has not made insensible to its effect, should be painfully disturbed by this unseemly chorus to their heart's deep tones of prayer and penitence, and praise. But if there is one person in our congregations, who from inconsideration repeats that word mechanically, and with less solemn feeling, than the rest of the responses, may I not kindly suggest a consideration, whether the ear of Deity is not offended by the discordance? I do not profess myself a public reformer; and the illiterate ranks from which our clerks are necessarily taken, would perhaps make it impossible to require that they should seem to mean something, by a sound they are hired to reiterate at given intervals. I leave it to those who know best, to determine how far it might be possible, without danger of innovation to the establishment, to get the key lowered. With the children of our schools, if teaching should fail to subdue the mechanical utterance by a feeling of devotion, it certainly might do something

to lower and modulate the sound. This by the way. My real intention is to awaken, in myself and others, an increased sense of the solemnity and importance of this ejaculation, as it is repeated after every form of address to the Almighty. A feeling of devotion in every heart, would bring a tone of devotion on every lip; and the loud *Amen* of our congregations, as well as the more suppressed ones in our family worship, would thus become a burst of sacred melody.

The meaning of the word we all know. It is at once an affirmation and a consent: intended to express our firm assurance that the words uttered are true, and our entire willingness that they should be true: or after a form of supplication, our earnest desire to be, and our assurance that we shall be, heard. "So be it." "So shall it be." The authority for the use of it we also know: the frequent command of God in the Old Testament, where it is generally affixed to his curses and threatenings: and the example of Jesus and his disciples, by whom it is more frequently connected with promises and prayer. Of its perpetual occurrence in our services, after every address whether of prayer or praise, or confession, if there is any historical or ecclesiastical explanation, I confess myself

totally ignorant of it; and speak from the immediate suggestions of my own mind, when I suppose it to imply that God, dealing with us as free agents and reasonable beings, requires the acquiescence of the will in all that He enjoins, and does not accept without it even our obedience. When He calls us to confession, it is not enough that we say at his bidding, and believe on his statement, that we are miserable sinners, and there is no health in us, and no help for us, but in his mercy—with an understanding mind and a consenting heart, it is necessary that we say "*Amen*" to this humiliating truth: conscious that it is so, and willing that it should be so. When we rehearse before him the principles of our faith, it is not enough that we yield submission to the method of salvation there described; and the truths therein set forth —our consent must accompany our assent— Amen—"so it is"—"so would we have it be." And in our prayers; when we ask protection from our enemies, defence from danger, and supply for our necessities, the word retains its entire meaning still; by the reiteration of it we profess not only to desire that so it may be, but to be assured that so it will be. If the word be affixed to the threatenings of God's law, to deprecations of his anger, to predictions of his

vengeance, it implies assent to their justice, persuasion of their certainty, and full consent to the terms on which they are either to be suffered or escaped. And when our language has been of praise and glory and exaltation to God, to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the offices ascribed to them, the Amen is significant of a heart glad and grateful to believe them what they are said to be: constrained, and not compelled to receive the benefits, and acknowledge them in the manner described.

If such is the deep importance of this word, it is surely no sound to be uttered carelessly. It is, on our part, like the affixing of a seal to a legal instrument, by which we agree to whatever it contains: which no man does inconsiderately. What if our careless, false amens, a hundred and a hundred times repeated, be written against us in the books of heaven! When at the last we attempt to plead our ignorance, our mistakes and misconceptions, may it not well be said to us that day by day, in solemn assembly before our Maker, we acknowledged, accepted, and approved these things, affixing as it were our signature to the writing that condemns us? This will be so said to thousands: and fellow sinners, who have echoed back our false amens, and angels who trembled when they

listened to them, and devils who stupified our senses while we uttered them, will be there to witness that they heard it.

Once more, let us dwell upon the value of this word: and surely we shall never again utter it in carelessness. Perhaps the power to pronounce it truly constitutes the difference between those who pray, and those who say prayers, yet pray not. God has made known his will to man, disclosing, of the past, the present, and the future, all that it is necessary we should know. Man does not like the disclosure. He does not like that the sin he loves should merit everlasting death—he does not like to be treated as a bankrupt debtor, a mendicant, and a culprit—he is averse to the state of helpless dependence assigned him; and, above all, averse to give up his will, and give up his glory to another, and be nothing. He sees no fitness, wisdom, or propriety in this state of things: but rather a position injurious and degrading to himself; on God's part a claim without justice or reason. When, therefore, by the custom of Christian worship, we come to acknowledge these things, the natural heart refuses its amen. The utmost it can subjoin, is an unwilling submission: "If it is so, so it must be"—we cannot say, "content." Can they

say it, who, proudly contentious against revealed truth, submit it to the scrutiny and decision of their own reason? Can they say it, who are so much in love with the things of time and sense, that they would part with God himself to keep them, and can scarcely spare a thought from them for him? Can they say amen, who never felt the burthen of their sin, its bondage or its deserts? The proud, the confident, the righteous in their own eyes, the earthly-minded, the careless, the unholy—these may all breathe the word, but cannot mean it. There are those, on the other hand, whose hearts may have been too cold, their thoughts too vagrant, in the prayer: there may come after it a self-condemning feeling, that it has been unworthily preferred: and yet they can affix to it an amen so full so willing, so sincere, it bursts forth from the heart, like tones of melody from the stricken wire.

ON FEMALE EDUCATION IN THE RESPECTABLE CLASSES.

PART I.

WITH REFERENCE TO THE GENERAL POSITION OF FEMALES IN SOCIETY.

How much more wise is God than man. Deity prepares everything for the situation it is to fill, and fits everything for the place it is to occupy. The tree of colder climes is provided with protecting buds, that those of warmer countries do not require. The animal that is lightly covered at the tropics, in arctic regions wears a coat of fur. Every flower is adapted to the season it is to blow in, and the soil from which it is to draw its nourishment. All the works of Deity, in short, have a specific purpose, and are adapted to the end they are to serve. Man does not profit as he might do by the divine example; he works, as it were, at random, without exactly

knowing what he aims at, or taking his measures in connection with his end.

It has been suggested as a probable reason why the ancients so much excelled us in architectural productions, that the sculptor and the architect were one; the site, the proportions, and the ornaments of the building were one great conception of the mind, and each part executed as a portion of a whole. The statue designed for elevation, was not proportioned to look well upon the base; the ornament, exquisitely beautiful in the workshop, did not prove without interest in its place; and thus, with each separate workman's labor, well and wisely done, the result was not, as it so often is now, a whole without fitness or effect. Something similar, I think, may be observed in works of greater moment; in structures that concern the welfare of society and the happiness of man. If we would form, and still more when we would execute, a good plan of education, it is not enough that it be considered in detail: that this thing is pleasing, and that thing is useful, and the other is customary; this may be all very true in the abstract, and sufficiently well effected, and yet our moral edifice be totally unfit for its purpose, and unbecoming its position. It is of the first importance to consider

education not as an end, but as a means to an end, and that a clearly defined one; before we can determine how our children should be brought up, we must fully understand the time, and place, and duties, for which education is to prepare them.

Another important consideration, not seldom left out of our calculations, is the material for our workmanship, the substance to be wrought upon, and the tools we have to work with. If we mistake in this, every effort will be an error, and every scheme a failure; and because the nature of man has been mistaken, and his powers and dispositions falsely estimated, many plans and systems of education carefully and consistently carried out, have been totally unavailing to their end, or productive of its contraries. Many a marble palace has been in conception reared of the readily moulded claystone, and no few artists have broken their tools upon the indurated rock, on which they were too fine to make an impression. To determine the best method of education, it is not enough to know what our children ought to be, and what by the appointment of providence they are to be: it is indispensable that we know rightly what they are, and what extent of power is in our hands affecting them.

Whatever be the defects of female education in this country at the present time, I am of opinion that it is greatly better than at any former period. I am confirmed in this persuasion by a reference to the well-known work of Mrs. Hannah More, the foundation stone, perhaps, of our improvement. The authority of her name, and her intimate knowledge of the world in which she lived, leaves no ground for doubting, that the account she gives of female education half a century ago, is a correct one. If so, we cannot, I think, but congratulate ourselves upon the change; or rather, be grateful to heaven for the progress already made towards improvement. "In particular, I observe," she says, "that the greatest deficiency is in the middle classes, while the highest and the lowest are of better promise." No doubt, since she says so, this was at that time true; but it is so obviously otherwise now, that it is very difficult to suppose it: by all present symptoms in the body corporate, one should conclude that the vitality, originated and hitherto concentrated at the heart, was but just now beginning to animate the palsied extremities. I would be understood to speak exclusively of females, when I say, that within the memory of man, the extremest ignorance and imbecility of mind

was to be looked for in quite the highest classes; because the minds of the very lowest, untaught as they formerly were, gain always some little vigor by the stern realities of their condition. I am willing to hope that Mrs. More's picture of female education would scarcely prove a likeness now, even among the votaries of fashion; but I feel sure that it can find its resemblance no where else; for which, perhaps, the world is to no one more indebted than to herself.

The education of women must ever be ordered with relation to their destinies: whether it be their general and universal destiny in the creation of God, their national destinies under the varieties of human legislation, or their particular destinies in the several gradations of society. On the first point the word of God, and the works of God, must be our guides; what by revelation He has declared that women are to be, and what in their natural endowments He has made them. Between these there is a perfect agreement; if ever they seem at variance, it is probably the result of education, counteracting, instead of subserving the designs of God. If He, assigning to woman a subordinate station, had given her equal powers, or even a capability, by culture, of becoming

equal, his works and his word would be at variance. On the other hand, designing her to be to man a solace and a helpmate upon earth, and in eternity his blest companion, if He had made woman so imbecile and helpless, that she could be only man's burthen, or his play-thing, there would be again no unity in the work of God and his declared intentions. And certainly there will be none between his works and ours, if we insist on counteracting those intentions either way. Again, as God's work and will in this respect are one, so are they permanent and immutable. The place of woman in creation does not change with change of time and place, neither do her natural comparative endowments. If ever she has contrived to change her position, or has been rendered unsuitable to it, it has been human workmanship, opposed to divine providence, and in a measure counteracting the provision of nature: but in a measure only; for whatever has succeeded in giving to women a different place from that appointed for them, has failed to make them fit for it. Thus far we have a basis firm and immovable on which to build. God has assigned to woman a destiny, and endowed her for it: His word will instruct us what it is; it is our first duty to observe it, and

as far as possible by education to prepare her for it. On which I would observe, in the way of application, that this is not done, when education tends in any way to prepare women for the path of publicity, or to incline them to it; or induces them, under pretext of enabling them, to become prominent in any thing that is essentially public. I must speak plainly, for innovation on this point has come from where it should not. Referring again to the venerable authority, for such it now is, that I before quoted, I observe that Hannah More did not so much as foresee the predicament at which we have arrived: while she warns us against the dangers that attend the public career of genius, and takes alarm at the then threatened intrusion of women upon the field of politics, it never occurs to her that they are in danger on more hallowed ground: she even congratulates them on their safety; she says, "as women are naturally more affectionate than fastidious, they are likely both to read and hear with a less critical spirit than men: they will not be on the watch to detect errors, so much as to gather improvement; they have seldom that hardness which is acquired by dealing deeply in books of controversy, but are more inclined to the perusal of works which quicken the devotional

feelings, than to such as awaken a spirit of doubt and scepticism. They are less disposed to consider the compositions they read, as materials on which to ground objections and answers, than as helps to faith and rules of life."

If this was so in the days of the good king George, we must make a comparison, alas! not this time in our favor. Again: "Women," says Mrs. More, "are also from their domestic habits in possession of more leisure and tranquility for religious pursuits, as well as secured from those difficulties and strong temptations to which men are exposed in the tumult of a bustling world. Their lives are more regular and uniform, less agitated by the passions, the businesses, the contentions, the shocks of opinions, and the opposition of interests which divide society and convulse the world."* This gifted writer was not gifted with "the second sight" it seems. She never anticipated other *bustle* than that of routs and ball-rooms; other shocks of opinions than those of whig and tory, in which women might be induced to merge their mental tranquillity and domestic leisure. How could she guess that the names of women would be heard amid the tumult of a distracted

* Strictures on Modern Education, ch. 14.

church; and their pious occupation oblige them to be visible every where—except at home.

Further, I think the divine ordination with respect to women is not consulted, when it is attempted to give them what may properly be called a masculine education: I mean an education similar in its aim, and similar in the plans pursued, to that which is adapted to our boys. I do not mean to complain of any thing that has been done hitherto: I really think that in respect of this, every change has been a step towards improvement, without any appearance of passing the legitimate boundary. But we know not what we may be coming to. It is not long since I read a paper in a well-known religious periodical, recommending a sort of public education for girls, similar to some modern establishments for boys; for the purpose, as I understood it, of getting rid of certain home-loving, home-becoming propensities, apt to be contracted by home education, something that we call *shyness*, when it does not suit our argument to call it *modesty*. It is true, this seemed but a faint murmur from some powerless innovator, which waked no reverberations; but it is no harm if the warning comes before the danger—"the previous blast foretells the coming storm." Our tide runs all one way; and every

little tributary stream is making for the overwhelming flood; many a useful barrier, many a safe division of the ground, has already disappeared, and we know not where the levelling torrent is to be stayed. I shall not pursue the subject to particulars which may more properly recur hereafter, but merely observe that it is impossible that the education of boys and girls ought to be the same, when providence has made their destinies so different.

And surely we contravene the will of heaven no less, if by education we do not enable women to occupy the station that is assigned them; if by enfeebling their minds, and enervating their bodies, whether from indulgence or want of culture, we render them unfit for their station in society, or incompetent to the performance of their duties. This was done by our forefathers to an extent of which we still feel the consequences. The generation has not yet passed away in which a mother's competency was only to feed her children and to clothe them; while their moral and intellectual culture was committed to a hireling, not because the mother would not, but because she could not teach them: when the wife's sympathies were limited to household cares, and her conversation to domestic detail; not for want of love, but for

want of capacity to share her husband's feelings, to understand his interests and pursuits, and be the partner of his thoughts, the helpmate indeed of all his joys and sorrows. I trust we are improving. I believe it has been discovered that money can hire a servant; but cannot buy an intelligent companion, a sympathising friend; can pay a sempstress, but not purchase maternal influence, or filial deference and respect.

PART II.

WITH REFERENCE TO THE PARTICULAR POSITION OF FEMALES IN THIS COUNTRY.

National character is too marked a thing to have at any time passed unobserved by the student of human nature. To whatever the differences are to be ascribed, whether to organic development, to the influence of climate, or to the perpetually accumulating effect of habit and association, bequeathed from age to age by the parent to the offspring; whether either of these or all conjointly, be the cause of dissimilarity, the fact is indisputable, that nations are as distinct in character as they are in language; the closest communication, however it may modify, does not annihilate the distinction; if it does so in individual cases, it is sufficiently a novelty to call forth the remark, that you would take such a person for a foreigner. No one can have travelled without observing how the passing of

an unmarked, invisible frontier, makes an entire change in the appearance and habits of the people among whom we are passing. This separation among the families of men, fruitful as it has been of their miseries, and originating, as no doubt it did, in their corruption, and the consequent confusion of their language, must be considered as the order of Providence in the present condition of mankind, working the good pleasure of the Lord, and subsisting in accordance with his will.

It is the part of education to consult, not to contravene this distinctness of national character, comprehending as it does our national manners, tastes, and propensities, and the general tone of society in the country. In doing otherwise, we may succeed to mar the designs of nature, but seldom to effect our own. We may remove the cedar from its heights, and plant the myrtle in its place; but its stunted growth will soon make us aware of our mistake. We can bring the choice exotic to our green-house, and delight ourselves with its rarity; but we cannot make it indigenous in the soil: he would come short of his harvest, who should insist on sowing his field with some favorite produce of another zone. Man is wiser in every thing than in the treatment of himself; in all other

things he observes the leading of nature, and makes use of it to his own benefit; in himself he quarrels with it, and often works in opposition to its dictates. National egotism has been a common subject of ridicule; and a boastful pretension to superiority is in all cases ridiculons. But if it be ridiculous to express a boastful preference of our country, it is to my mind disgusting to hear any one depreciate the character of his own nation. It has been in some circles a fashion to do so; and young people in particular, on the assumption of a few months' knowledge of other countries, and no knowledge at all of national character, have thought it very fine to depreciate every thing English, and affect to consider the locality of their birth a misfortune. I will not incur the ridicule of egotism by extolling our national character, but this I will say, at all risks; if as English women we are not satisfied with our destinies, we are the most ungrateful of all people; and the most mistaken; for nothing but ignorance can make us insensible of our comparative advantages. Our very peculiarities, or let them be called defects, have their origin in our superior happiness. I believe we are less gay exactly because we are more substantially happy; we are deficient in what is called amusement, because

we have no need of it; we have less zest for social pleasures, precisely because we have more domestic and individual enjoyment; it is the healthful appetite that has seldomest recourse to artificial stimulants.

However this may be, God has appointed us our place; to quarrel with it, is to rebel against his providence; to unfit ourselves for it, is to act in manifest opposition to his purpose. It is for England, for English duties, and English society, and English happiness, that we are to educate our children; if we will do otherwise, we shall succeed, no doubt, to disqualify them for these; so far nature may be overcome, and the designs of Providence be traversed, but no farther; we shall not succeed in possessing them with any thing instead. I cannot state too strongly what I think of the folly, in some cases the sin, of those parents who take or send their girls to the continent for education, or for any part of it. The advantages they derive, and there are several, are exactly such as they do not want; their attainments such as nobody requires of them. A foreign-taught girl on her return to England, is like a merchant adventurer, who should arrive under the line with an investment of furs and flannels; nobody wants their merchandise, and they are bankrupt in

the plentitude of their acquisitions. It is no advantage to a woman to be different from those around her, least of all to be conspicuous in external acquirements; even vanity is not gratified when she finds that her excelling pleases nobody but herself. That which society does not reciprocate, it does not require, and cannot estimate, and will not accept. Perhaps a girl acquires confidence, but in England we call it effrontery; she acquires gaiety, but we call it levity; she gets facility in talking, but we are a silent people; she gains in the coloring, but we value things by weight. This is English prejudice. Very likely, but it does not alter the predicament. Since foreign travel and more intercourse with other nations has enlarged our minds, we shall perhaps be liberal, and make excuses for our young friends on the ground of their foreign education; and then the result of their supposed advantages will be, *to be excused.* Meantime, at what price have they been purchased? At the risk of all that should be most valued, and most jealously guarded by a Christian parent, at the certain cost of their own happiness when they return. If they perform their duties, it is uneasily; if they fill their place in society, it is without enjoyment: resuming English habits, they cannot resume again their

English tastes, or regain their English happiness. And if it is painful to observe how much this practice of educating girls abroad obtains among the middle classes at the present time, it is to my mind an astonishment that it can find examples among religious people; a thing that before the fact I should have judged to be impossible. By the disciples of Christ there can be no aspiring after factitious advantages, and powers of display, and means of distinction in the world's society. They can have no ambition to see their girls the best dancers, or the best dressers, or the best talkers, in the life of quietness and detachment for which they are intended. That the education thus acquired is more solidly good no one affects to think; and I believe no pious parent can affect to perceive no danger in it. The only excuse attempted is the cheapness; education in England is expensive. I shall not dwell upon this at present, because I may have occasion to recur to it in speaking of the destinies of women in their respective stations; but surely these are unbecoming words on a believer's lips; admit the practice to be objectionable, and will the Christian mother dare to say, that more education is necessary for her child than God has given her the means to pay for; and therefore she must

take the risk? No one will say this, but does no one *act* it?

An Englishwoman's peculiar destination is her home; it is there she has her duties, and there she has her enjoyments; and since it is so I cannot but believe that it is there she should have her education; certainly to this exclusively her education should be directed. Whatever can make her more agreeable, more useful, or more happy in private life, is properly a part of it, and I believe nothing else; for even in the highest ranks of life she is never avowedly called out of it. She need not brace her nerves and harden her heart, to act the Spartan mother; nor inure herself to danger, nor practise herself in intrigue, to follow her husband to the camp or to the court; where if she appears, it is as a partaker of his pomp and pleasures only, not of his serious occupations. Above the laboring classes, ease, leisure, and indulgence, are for the most part our happy portion; private connection draws a charmed circle round us, a little more or less extended, beyond which our duties seldom call us, the agitations of society seldom affect us, and even its opinion does not touch us. A woman, therefore, has no occasion for that knowledge of the world, as it is called, and preparation for

life, which is supposed to be the advantage of a boy in public education, by which I mean education in large numbers. There is no need to blunt her sensibilities by collision, to destroy her delicacy by exposure, and her simplicity by a permature experience of human artifice and aggression. It was sometime thought necessary to a lady's accomplishment, that she should be taught to fence and fire at a mark; it is only a change in the weapons, if she must now learn confidence and independence of spirit in the field of rivalry and competition.

Any degree of mental culture, not obtained at the expense of feminine habits and feelings, does not appear to me likely to unfit women for the duties and enjoyments of private life. The pleasures of knowledge are essentially private. Mere accomplishments may have a field of exhibition in company; solid instruction very seldom has, and if it has, the better informed is the giver, not the receiver of the pleasure. In any company the most intellectual person is likely to feel the dullest, and be left the loser, since no one pays back his contribution to the common fund. The real enjoyment of knowledge is within the mind that possesses it, or in the near communion of equal minds. Its value is in its influence on the judg-

ment and the understanding; through them on the feelings and opinions; and by these ultimately on the life and conversation, like the covered spring, which is only perceptible by the freshness of the verdure that surrounds it. For this reason, I think no degree of solid instruction of any kind, can unfit a woman for the duties and delights of private life. And lest my allusion to accomplishments should be misconstrued, I would add, that they are the flowers of our garden, which we do not reject because they bear no fruit; they make brighter a sunny day, and cheer a gloomy one, though they fail to fill our store-house. I cannot think that extraordinary excellence in any accomplishment is worth the price of its attainment, or even desirable in itself, if it amounts to distinction; but only so much as contributes to the mutual enjoyment of social and domestic life, according to our natural gifts and providential opportunities of improving them. Never can their value, or even the more intrinsic value of solid instruction, give a countenance to the ambitious struggle after advantages which Providence has denied; the proud determination of those who have not the means, to keep pace with those who have, in this day so ruinously prevalent; ruinous in expenses, anxiously provided for;

in time that ought to be otherwise devoted; in health, of which the loss embitters and incapacitates the remainder of existence.

A very few words with reference to the religious education of women in this country. It is a home religion that we want; it is an influential, not a talking one; it is a quiet, not a bustling one. Argument, criticism, controversy, gifts of prayer, fluency of speech, zeal in the shock of parties, are public demonstrations of religion, required of some, but not required of us. A female's piety should be no wandering star, shooting hither and thither to be visible far off. It should be as a lamp fixed in its own place, shedding, to a certain distance, its steady equal light, but brightest always to those that are the nearest.

PART III.

WITH REFERENCE TO THE POSITION OF FEMALES IN THEIR DIFFERENT STATIONS OF LIFE.

It has been said by one reputed wise, that "in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Solomon knew what he spake of; heavenly wisdom and the knowledge of God were not in his mind when he said this; of all other learning he had made sufficient experience to know what it is worth, and here is his conclusion—"This also is vanity." Others, less enlightened than the king of Israel, in what concerns the happiness of mankind, but deeply experienced in their misery, have borne testimony to the same truth, exhibiting in their profligate and wretched lives, the mournful confirmation of their own saying,

> "They who know the most,
> Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
> The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life."

In contradiction to these authorities, and to

all past experience, mankind seem now to think that knowledge is the universal remedy of ill, the fundamental good, the harbinger of perfection. Of a thing so valuable, it follows of course that nobody can have too much, and nobody can sit down to count the cost; it is equally good for all, and we must, if necessary, sell all that we have, to buy it. Is not this in action, or in language variously modified, the prevalent opinion in this country at the present time? What may be the political result of a people too wise for subordination, too much enlightened for subjection, and too free to be controlled by God or man; and whether it is we, or our children, who must abide the issue, it is not our occasion to consider. We cannot stay the current, nor oppose in the aggregate its dangerous force. We can only, each one in his own small sphere, use such measures of influence as we have, to give warning of the danger, and bend opinion to a safer course. We shall confine ourselves to our subject, however some of our remarks may be applicable beyond our limit.

We have come to place learning on a different ground from every other earthly good; but there is really no difference in their nature. Wealth is good and power is good, and every

other endowment good, as far as it is given of God, and by him blessed to a just and righteous use. But we agree, Christians at least agree, that ambition is a sin, and covetousness is a sin, and too restless a desire, or too earnest a pursuit of any earthly good, is universally admitted to be contrary to godliness. Why is knowledge exempted from this conclusion? It is an earthly good, excellent when God sanctifies and blesses it, most dangerous when he does not; and I am sure that they who will be wise, irrespective of His will, do compass themselves about with full as many sorrows as they that will be rich. It is only another character of ambition: the desire to be uppermost. Why then does the Christian mother, who would be ashamed to say or to feel that she covets rank, or riches, or beauty for her girls, think there is no effort and no sacrifice she ought not to make to have them clever and accomplished? Do you mean to say, perhaps the mother answers me, that knowledge is of no more value than beauty and riches? I mean to say, that however the golden sovereign may exceed in value the silver sixpence, you are no more at liberty to covet the one than the other, nor to procure it by unrighteous means. Costly instruction is no more necessary to our children than costly clothing,

however much more desirable. It is not because one earthly good exceeds another in value, that we are to insist on having it in spite of that Providence which has denied the means; or under the plea of necessity, to make a sacrifice of principle in order to obtain it. Yet I am afraid that in the present day this is done, it may be inconsiderately, to a very great extent. I have alluded before to the practice of sending girls to the continent for education, under pretext of its being so much cheaper than in England. I hear the same reason given for subjecting them to the contamination of indiscriminate mixture, or for any plan of innovation upon the habits and proprieties of domestic life, which economy can devise, to procure at a lower cost what is not properly within the parents' means. I feel so sure that this is wrong in principle, and in practice adverse to the will of God, that while economy is admitted to be a sufficient reason for choosing between two modes of education equally unobjectionable, I believe it can never be a reason for exposing a child to the risk of moral or spiritual injury, or of any thing that may injuriously affect her happiness and usefulness in her own station. Whatever is to be attained by such economy, had better be dispensed with altogether. What God requires

in our children, he will give us the means of procuring without any sacrifice of principle; what the world and its fashions may require, the Christian parent at least has nothing to do with. It is a mistake to suppose that our temporal and spiritual welfare is at variance; it may seem so, but it cannot be.

Learning and education are not the same thing; if they were, the greatest degree of acquired knowledge would constitute the best education; whereas, in fact, a learned and expensive education often proves a very bad one: while some, with a very small fund of knowledge acquired, have been excellently well educated for the station they fill. I think it may be the want of distinctness in our perception of this difference, that has led to the supposition that too much cannot be taught to children in any station of life; that what improves the character of the rich, must necessarily be improving to the character of the poor; that increase of knowledge must invariably, and to whatever degree, be an increased means of happiness to the possessor, and of benefit to the society of which he is a part. If, however, the just end and aim of education is to fit a woman for the destiny assigned her by the Almighty, only so much instruction should be imparted as

is calculated to increase her usefulness and happiness in her probable sphere of life, varying in every different gradation of society: her education ought not to be that which will make her aspire beyond it, or feel uncomfortable in it. This is, I think, the great error we have been committing, and are committing from one end of society to the other. We talk of raising the character of the people by education, but we do not distinguish between raising the moral and raising the intellectual character; yet they have no necessary connection. The most vicious men that have existed have been the most intelligent and accomplished. Even if by improving the faculties of an individual you could insure a proportionate elevation in his station, which you cannot, you have not necessarily made him a better or a happier man. *He* is a better and a happier man than his neighbor, who is fitter for his condition, and more contented in it; not he who is in station higher. The gradations of society are of God's appointment, and by no means proofs of his partiality. When the habits, feelings, and capacities, are on the same level with the condition, I have no doubt that the happiness of each class is pretty nearly equal in the aggregate, though perhaps not equal individually; and the individual inequality is

as great between persons of the same class as between those of different classes. If then we aim by education to make a happier and a better people, I think it must be by making each one fitter for the station he is in, not by fitting him to rise. An aspiring people can never be a satisfied one; and an unsatisfied people can never be a happy one. I am aware that this is disputable ground; and many will dispute it: they will say, why not prepare our children to raise themselves to a higher condition?—the highest in this country has been often attained by those who are born in the lowest. Perhaps facts would prove that such persons have risen by their own powers rather than by an education above their original circumstances; but I mean to speak of female education exclusively, and therefore shall not contest the point with reference to boys. I am sure that with reference to girls no such speculation is admissible: the position of a girl in society is the place her parents occupy; it is not likely or desirable that she should change it. She may, by the act of Providence, be raised above it, and find her education deficient in her new station; or she may, by the same Providence, sink below it, and then her cultivated feelings and habits will subject her to much

suffering: but as such changes cannot be calculated in an unseen Providence, it is impossible they can be wisely taken into account in a suitable education.

When I have given this opinion, it will perhaps be anticipated that I object to much that is doing in gratuitous education. We cannot prohibit, we have no right to prohibit, the acquisition of knowledge by those who have the means and choose so to expend them: whatever we may think, we have no right to interfere; but the boon of charity we have a right to limit to our own sense of its utility. Against the aspiring current of the present day, I own myself of opinion that beside religious instruction, reading and writing for boys, and reading and needle-work for girls, is all that charity can advantageously bestow; because, for the quite lowest class, which the demaud on charity supposes, I believe it to be all that is really desirable: of course, I do not refer to institutions expressly designed for higher classes. The females of our charity schools, whose almost universal destination is that of domestic servants, or wives of day-laborers, or to daily labor for themselves, will not be the happier or the better for more instruction. The addition of writing is perhaps of little consequence either

way; but the taste for books likely to be acquired by more extended cultivation, I consider to be a real evil. The only reading such a female wants is her Bible daily, if she will make time for it; and some religious books for her Sunday leisure. In the week her needle is the natural and useful occupation of such leisure hours as she has; there is no one of the above positions in which, for herself or her family, a woman does not want more time for her needle than she can command, to answer the demands of neatness and economy. This occupation will be the relaxation she chooses from severer labor, if no other taste has been artificially excited: but if a taste for reading has been induced, it must either remain an unsatisfied desire, which is no friend to happiness or be indulged at the cost of something which she has not to spare.

As we advance a little higher, we should wish the sphere of thought enlarged; because wherever there is leisure, there will be mischief to occupy it, if there is not good. The woman who has time to visit, and time to gossip, and time to enjoy her family without incessant working for them, has time to read; and the love of reading, which comes by cultivation, will greatly tend to withhold her from idle and pernicious

pleasures, from low habits and erroneous feelings. As much plain English learning as a father in this situation can afford to give his daughter, without extravagance or interference with their domestic duties, cannot, I think, but render them more respectable, nor is likely to unfit them for the shop, or any other probable destination. The folly that has gone beyond this, attempting to add accomplishments, so called, to useful instruction, and bring into this sphere a little bad music and imaginary French. far enough from the real language, and whatever else a vulgar boarding-school affects to supply of polite education, is simply pernicious, without the possibility of good; and has been productive of evils little contemplated by the well-meaning but probably ignorant parent, whose vanity is thus imposed upon by the semblance of acquisitions which cannot possibly be made, and would be of no use if they could; while the minds of their children are as really uninformed and uncultivated, as if no education had been given them. The girls in a free school would in all real knowledge put to shame the young ladies whose teaching has been paid for at these low seminaries of polite learning.

But our readers of this class may take comfort, they have not been alone in their mistake.

The old school system is expiring fast. We need not despair to see the end of the conventional imposition, by which a parent had done his duty towards his children when he had paid an exorbitant bill; and the governess had done her duty when she had received them, not to her own care, but to that of uninterested, irresponsible, and for the most part incompetent teachers: when it was enough for the mother that she saw her daughters twice a year, replenished with drawings that they never drew, and compositions that their masters wrote; tasks surreptitiously performed, and lessons never understood: and enough for the governess that she visited the school-room once a day, went through the form of hearing a prepared lesson, or perhaps witnessed the silent performance of the dinner; and left them twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four to corrupt each other as they might. The increasing good sense of the community, I am happy to believe, is fast putting an end to this monstrous fiction. Small schools, of which the responsible governess is the real instructor and watchful companion of her pupils, have almost superseded these larger ones among the richer classes. Happy will be the generation in which the last expires; and parents less affluent will be wiser if in this re-

spect they follow the example of the richer, though it should be at the sacrifice of much which they now think it necessary their daughters should learn, and perhaps cannot afford them in any other manner.

In the range of society, in this country so wide and diversified, in which females, however different in rank, are entitled to be considered gentlewomen, I cannot perceive any distinction required, but that of the individual difference of fortune. What is good for one is good for another, provided it be proportionate to the means of obtaining it, which cannot be measured by rank. The bad education of the female nobility and women of fashion has been not their privilege but their misfortune; they will be better and happier, and fitter for the duties of their high station, in proportion as it approximates to that which is beneficially given to private gentlewomen in middle life. To all of these I have before remarked, that I cannot suppose any measure of instruction to be injurious, if it be not injuriously obtained. I cannot imagine a lady to know too much, if it be not, as the poet speaks of our first parents,

"Knowledge of good, bought dear, by knowing ill."

PART IV.

WITH REFFERENCE TO THEIR NATURAL CONDITION AND ETERNAL DESTINY.

It was observed, at the commencement of these remarks, that the education of women should be ordered with relation to their destinies, to the manifest designs of the Creator for them, and the qualifications with which they are endowed. We have spoken with reference to their general, national, and individual destinies in this life. But the deepest consideration is to come. If early education is a preparation for life, life itself is but a preparation and an education for eternity. If this be not considered, our utmost success will be a miserable failure. We may, indeed, succeed; we may make our daughters brillant and amiable, and if adversity try them not, happy for a season: we may see them fulfil the duties of their station, and walk gracefully amid the love and

smiles of all around them; yet education will fail of its highest end, the accomplishment of the designs of God for the happiness of his creatures; our means will be wasted, and our labor lost; "For this shall ye have at my hand, saith the Lord, ye shall lie down in sorrow." Not that there is any difference between the real interests of time and eternity: one happiness for the way, and another for the end; one supreme good now, another hereafter. But there are two ways and two ends: different; contrasted: what fits us for the one does not fit us for the other, nor is calculated to lead us to it. Herein, I consider, is the difficulty of all general treatises upon the subject of education. We must make a separation at the outset; we must say to the children of this world, "that is the way to the attainment of your object;" to the Christian parent, "it is not the way to yours." When the workman prepares to work, he considers how long his facric is to last; whether his ornaments and coloring are to abide the day-light, or be only the embellishments of a festive night. A universal war has been indeed proclaimed against distinctions, by the name of prejudice; a plan of national education has been devised to comprehend the light of protestantism and the

darkness of popery, and may be made to embrace the churchman and the dissenter, the friends and enemies of Christ among both. The time may be come, when the wise and the ignorant are to divide the legislation, and he who has ten talents is to commit five of them to the management of him who has but one, for the better regulation of the world's affairs: all land-marks may be removed, and earthly distinctions levelled: but one separation will remain, one distinction stands for ever, though Satan spares no effort to efface it; the narrow way that leadeth to life, and the broad way that leadeth to destruction, will be as separate as ever. The time will never come when the votaries of time and sense, walking after the course of this world, can be prepared for it by exactly the same education as befits the children of godliness, walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

What must we do, then? Must we not dismiss one party from the scene, and say to the mother who has no care for any thing but her daughter's success and happiness in this life, "The world requires that they who pursue its pleasures should be able to give those pleasures zest, and they who pursue its honors wear them becomingly. The world will not put the

crown upon the head of one who will not strive for the mastery, after its own manner. Your children must be bred in exact conformity with its opinions, and early accustomed to its fashions, or they will not be found acceptable in its gay and polished circles. They must be prepared to enter the lists with spirit and emulation, or they will never carry off the prizes. The world does not like humility, shame-facedness and sobriety, the gospel ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit. The world does not want to be suspected in its principles, questioned in its opinions, or despised in its vanities, by the young aspirants for its favor. In education above all things it may be said, "Choose ye whom ye will serve;" for neither master will give his wages to another's servant.

We need scarcely say how different is the position of the pious parent, and the hoped-for, and prayed-for, destiny of his children, sons and daughters of the most high God, but strangers and pilgrims upon earth, with no abiding city here, but seeking a country, even a heavenly. Their destiny there, and their position now, are the considerations by which all plans of education must be directed; how they may be fitted for their pilgrimage, and prepared to take their place in the Redeemer's

kingdom. The parent may not shrink from this strong ground, and taking shelter under the supremacy of the Divine will, plead the uncertainty of their children's destination. It is uncertain; our children may not choose Christ, and Christ may not choose them, and they may have their portion in this life, our choice notwithstanding; but we must make a choice; for so only shall we have honestly performed our part, and so only may hope a blessing on the consistent acting of our faith. It will perhaps be said to us, as to one of old, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee; and his daughter was made whole from that very hour."

There are many, very many things, a stranger and a pilgrim does not want, however necessary to those that are at home; and there is much that is admired and highly thought of here, which in that far kingdom will not be in fashion. I am far from saying, that religious parents are not considerate of this, and do not, to a considerable extent, act upon it in the education of their girls; but I think a clear, accurate, and decisive perception of this truth, would settle many doubts, and put an end to disputed practices, and remove difficulties out of the way of the scrupulous and conscientious mother.

It seems to be the peculiar device of Satan, at the present day, to discredit the detachment of believers from the world: to persuade them that the law is obsolete, and that they may now enter into competition, and take possession in the name of the Lord. We hear of a religious party in every field of contention, and if we may judge from the sounds which reach us of the strife, their weapons are not confined to the sword of the spirit, or the shield of faith. The tempter says, the honor of religion is at stake; our children must not come short of any thing the world admires, lest it be imputed to religion; there must be nothing seen in them that the world dislikes, lest it excite a prejudice against religion. I never hear such language, or make use of it, without feeling what an unscriptural sound it has. No doubt it is applicable sometimes; but only so far as the apostle's words will bear it out; "Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Where could the Christian mother find so beautiful a compendium of all that is desirable to cultivate in her children;

and yet they would be much abridged of this world's fashions and opinions, in which are things not true, not honest, not just, or pure; and if they be lovely, and of good report, it is in the praise of men, and not of God.

I have said that there is no difference between the real interests of time and eternity—God has not appointed one happiness for the way and another for the end; one supreme good now and another hereafter. The consummation of a woman's happiness and the perfection of her character, is that she be one with Christ in all things." "To be with him and to be like him." In proportion as she advances towards this end, she will be in this life happy and useful and lovely. In the pursuit of it not one innocent gratification, suited to our condition here, nor any enjoyment of what Almighty goodness has provided for our earthly state, need be relinquished: no mental powers need be suppressed, nor social charm put off: else would God's work and his design be at variance: his works and his word would not agree. He has sent us on a journey, and provided us with all things desirable for the way: if we do not forget or mistake the destined end, we shall not find our outfit deficient or superfluous; we need not divert it from its uses, or

get rid of it as an incumbrance. The period of education is no inconsiderable portion of this journey, with the additional importance that it must greatly influence the remainder. How indispensable then that no step be taken in it without a distinct reference to the final destination of our children. In this division of the subject, we need make no distinction between rich and poor; there is one rule for all: whatever tends to the increase of vital godliness, and the renewal of the divine image in the soul, is to be cultivated: whatever is opposed to the one, or tends to the effacing of the other, is to be relinquished.

We have but one more remark. The builder, before he begins his edifice, must well consider the material he has to build with; or only defeat and disappointment will ensue. Perhaps the greatest failures in education have originated in this: that men do not consider what their children are. We make up our minds what we would have them be; perhaps we consider what God requires they should be; and we leave out of the account what they are: portions of a corrupted mass: seed of a lost progenitor: born in iniquity and conceived in sin, by nature prone to every evil way, but to all good things adverse: dead—born dead every

one of them spiritually; and morally sick unto death. If this is true, how many systems of education must be dismissed at the outset, as inapplicable to our purpose: because they treat of childhood either as a pure blank leaf, on which it is as easy to make one impression as another, or as a balance so equally poised between good and evil principles, that we have only to throw our weight into the right scale. How unlike to the reality! Every parent, and every one who in education supplies a parent's place, is in fact a physician and a nurse; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; our children are like ourselves, there is no health in them. From the first dawn of reason there is inbred sin to contend against, which only waits the development of the organs to manifest itself in opposition to our efforts. The ground is pre-occupied; the soil is full of weeds, and they are more free to grow than any thing we plant; the climate suits them, and our very culture helps to make them flourish. In this is our real difficulty, and if this be not taken into the account, we shall till the soil in vain. And this is not all. Besides the inborn seeds of moral sickness, there is pestilence in the atmosphere; there is contagion every where around them, with every predisposition in themselves to

be infected. And further still than this, they are the born servants of a master, who will urge his claim every hour of their existence, and spare nothing to retain them in his service.

It is no encouraging picture of the task of education; and if we mean to pursue it without divine assistance, it may well leave us hopeless. A full measure of help is offered us, if we will observe the terms, and an ample promise of success, if the conditions on our part be fulfilled; but if we shut our eyes to the fact, and, refusing the Scripture testimony of the nature of man, build a system of education upon reason and philosophy, and mere moral suasion, irrespective of these painful circumstances, two evils must, as they are seen to do, continually result: we shall expect more than is reasonable; and we shall effect less than might be effected.

We do often expect of children more than is reasonable; we require of the sick, the vigorous action of health; we expect the symptoms to disappear while the disease remains; we mould our clay, and give it form and coloring, and wonder after all to find that it is but clay—easily marred, and very little worth with all our pains. Few people are patient enough, considerate enough, moderate enough, in their expectation and management of youth. But while presump-

tion on the one hand makes us unreasonable, the same presumption on the other hand makes us careless. We give them, sick to death, the regimen of health; we expose them in their feebleness to the most pernicious influences, allow them to choose for themselves, and judge for themselves, as if there were no bias in their nature towards the wrong. Thus again we mistake our base clay for the firm and solid marble, and take no care to shelter and protect it from whatever tends to spoil our work, and destroy our perishable material. So many things are unsafe and injurious to man as a sinner; to the heart deceitful, to the taste preverted, to the nature fallen and corrupt, which to an innocent and righteous being would be innoxious, that it is most indispensable that we certify ourselves at the outset, of the condition of our children, as they come by nature to our hands. Much has been written, and much has been done, irrespective of this consideration; but it is surely not too much to say, that every step so taken, must be taken amiss, or at a most hazardous venture. We leave to the consideration of parents these few slight suggestions, which to carry out would require a volume.

THE TIMES.

I.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TIMES?

Among the most distant recollections of my childhood, are the complaints I used to hear continually of "The Times;" and I well remember the impression upon my mind, without understanding it, was, that there never had been a time so fearful and calamitous as that in which we had the misfortune to be living. Often have I sat and listened to the conversation of my parents or my nurse, and heard them tell of the good old Times when every thing had been prosperous, (I could never distinctly learn when it was) and bread had been a shilling the quartern loaf—it was then eighteen-pence. Whatever was regretted was attributed to the badness of the times: whatever seemed desira-

ble, was to be hoped for when the times should be better. Anarchy, starvation, but more particularly invasion, were the terrific images that filled my childish imagination, while listening to such conversation. And they filled, I believe, much older imaginations than mine, possibly not without reason: I only revert to it to show that men have at all periods been in the habit of complaining of the Times in which they have happened to live, as if they were worse than any other. Those of which I am speaking, were a perfect contrast to the present. Taxes were yearly increasing: the price of every thing was enormously high: bread, as I have observed, was eighteen-pence the quartern. A long war had occasioned so much excitement and activity, that every body was employed; many were growing excessively rich; and the greater number were raising their families to a higher station than that to which they had been born. Yet they were dreadful Times; so I heard it said: the people thought they were oppressed and ill-governed, and were dissatisfied—in short, "the French were coming," as it was commonly said, that the nation was on the point of bankruptcy and ruin. Many an old woman I remember, who buried a bag of gold, to save her from starving when the Bank of England

should stop payment. All is now reversed; peace has succeeded to war; the quartern loaf has fallen much below the shilling; the value of every thing is diminished; occupation is hard to be procured, and money harder still: and of the many who grew so rapidly rich, numbers have sunk, or are gradually sinking to the level of their fore-fathers. But change what may, the Times are as bad as ever: still the very worst that ever have been known. And the records of history confirm the records of memory; for every one who has written the memoirs of his own Times, has invariably called them *bad Times.*

Now what is really meant by this? What is meant by "The Times?" for I am sure the word is used every day in the hearing of our readers, whether they be young or old; perhaps they use it frequently themselves, and most probably attach some painful idea to it: for I never heard it coupled with an expression of thankfulness and contentment. We all read newspapers, and we all talk politics: but we talk, even Christians talk—I wish they did not—as if God had given up the reins of government, and left his people at the mercy of the world. Sure I am, that those who speak to or before the rising generation, should be very

careful of their language on this subject; exchanging the bitterness of complaint, and the irritation of party feelings, for the calm language of a grateful and confiding spirit, that knows who is over all. The people err and commit wickedness: kings transgress and ministers do wrong: and misery follows upon sin. It becomes us to mourn for them, as we must suffer with them. But it does not become the people of God to be irritated and desponding about public affairs, as if they did not know that "all things," even the mistakes of the ungodly and the devices of Satan, "work together for good to them that love God."

The Scripture says that the times and seasons are with the Lord. Now it seems very extraordinary that what omnipotent goodness overrules, should be always so very bad. Let us seriously consider what is meant by it. Time, as distinguished from eternity, and as regards mankind, begins in Paradise, and ends at the resurrection of the dead; that moment at which St. John, in the apocalypse, heard one swear that "time should be no longer." This period, divided into successive ages and generations of men, each characterised by some things peculiar to itself, and some peculiar interferences of divine providence, comprehends the "Times"

that men have had to do with. When it began, they were good, no doubt; for all was good that Almighty goodness had ordained. After the fall, the Times were changed indeed, but it was not that God was changed, or that what he ordained could ever be otherwise than good. It was owing to God's goodness that Time continued to be at all: that he did not destroy the world, and put an end to it at once. It was continued for no other purpose, but to redeem from sin and death, those who will repent and return to God, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is true in general; the world's sentence was reprieved: the execution was delayed: and the season of grace that intervenes, is the interval that we call "Time." With respect to individuals, from the least to the greatest, the years that we live upon the earth, which is what we call "Our own Times," is the interval that God mercifully grants us, to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with Him, to love and serve Him here, that we may be prepared to dwell with him in heaven.

Whatever men in common talk may mean, this is the real meaning of "the Times"—of "our own Times." It is of God's goodness that we have any, and his design in it is good; if the Times are not good to us, it can only be because

they do not serve the purpose He intends. If the use of life was to grow rich, then there would be "bad Times," whenever we grew poor. If the use of life was to enjoy ourselves a little while and die, then there would be "bad Times," whenever difficulties and troubles overtake us. But if it be true that life is given us, and has no other use and purpose, but to find and follow after everlasting happiness, then, before we pronounce them to be good or evil, and more particularly before we are heard to complain of them, we ought to examine how far they are favorable or otherwise to the attainment of this purpose; which alone can make them good or bad to us.

II.

WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH THE TIMES?

No person of reflection can pass through the metropolis and its suburbs in the dusk of approaching night, without being struck with the air of confidence and security with which the crowds that throng the streets seem to be pursuing, each one his own purpose, fearless of all around him. Amongst hundreds of careless, cheerful countenances, you perceive a few poverty-stricken, miserable wretches, whom vice generally, perhaps always, has made painful to look upon. But even these pass unmolested, and are certain of protection if they need it. Yet of all this clothed, and fed, and protected multitude, not one but, if you asked them, would tell you that "the Times are bad." Follow the different classes to their homes—I do not say you will find no wretchedness there; but you

will find much with which "the Times" have little enough to do. There never was a time, and never will be, through all eternity, in which vice does not produce misery: they seldom part company at all, and never long. The idle and dissolute must be put out of the question, before we form an estimate of the Times; for all periods are alike to them. Still there will be found some in the lowest class, who, without their own faults, are suffering the pressure of poverty, and unable to live by the willing labor of their hands. This is an evil feature in our times; we must admit it: because though God has designed there should be rich and poor, and that the greater number should earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, it is not in the order of Providence that any one who will work shall not eat. It must therefore originate in a corrupt state of society. If we concede to these sufferers, who are but the few among the many, that they may in some sense say their Times are evil, we would remind them still that God's purpose in giving them time is not defeated, and his purpose is as good towards them as towards others. Life itself, and all the means with which it has hitherto been supported, and all they have had in it since the day they were born, which, if little in compari-

son with others, is much compared with their deserts; all is granted by divine goodness to give them an opportunity of reaching eternal happiness. Their sufferings here, so far from preventing this, are rather favorable to it, by calling them to thoughtfulness and prayer; but these, after all, are the few, and by no means the loudest talkers about the Times: the many will be found to have not only food and raiment, which the Bible says should content a godly man, but many, O how many things beside! What unnecessary indulgences, what prodigality of comforts! We talk of the bliss of Paradise, but we forget that it consisted in the character of our first parents, and the friendship of God; they did not have, and did not want, the hundred thousand things we think it impossible to be happy without, and which God mercifully gives us, more or less, though not at all necessary to the purpose for which our Times are granted us. But follow home the crowd to their warm houses and wholesome tables, some to their splendid and luxurious ones; and before an hour has passed you will hear every one say, "the Times are bad."

What then is really the matter with them? We have remarked that the dispensations of God have varied in different ages, though his

good purpose never changes; and all ages and generations have something in them peculiar to themselves. What then is particular in our Times to distinguish them from others? No one can doubt that men have more opportunity of knowing God, than they have ever had since Adam went out of Paradise. The word of God is read by more people than ever before possessed it, or could have read it if they had; and there are more external helps to the right understanding of the Bible, than there ever were before. If asked what characterizes the present age, every one would readily answer, "intelligence, knowledge, education." Men talk boastfully of this, and would not like to hear it called a bad feature of the Times; yet they do not consider what alone can make it a good one, viz., that by enabling men to read and understand the word and the works of God, it is calculated to subserve the real purpose of existence, and bring us to the discovery of what we live for. Looking upon the external aspect of things, every body must admit there never was a period when it was so easy to find out the way to heaven, and to follow it; in which so much opportunity, information, and encouragement, has been given to all ranks of people, to walk in the paths of salvation. This

to do, is the only use of time, and yet the Times are the worst that ever were known.

Now if they are, which I do not believe, although I hear good people say it every day, who ought not to complain unwittingly—if they are bad, it is not because God's goodness has grown less, or his gifts diminished or our advantages been withdrawn. These have done nothing but increase, and I do not believe they were ever so great to any people, at any time, as to Great Britain in this generation. It is because we have done exactly what God warned the children of Israel not to do, when they were established in the good land whither they went in to possess it. In the first chapters of Deuteronomy, we shall find the whole history of "our Times:" "We have corrupted ourselves in the greatness of our abundance; we have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when our flocks and our herds multiplied, and our silver and gold were multiplied, beyond what ever happened to any nation, then our hearts were lifted up, and we forgat God." Every man that had more than his fathers, desired that his children should have more still. He did not ask it of God, because for shame he could not, and so he resolved to obtain it in spite of him. He de-

spised all those Gospel precepts that bade him not make haste to be rich; not to give his labor for that which satisfieth not; not to be cumbered with much serving, and troubled about many things. The more he had the more he wanted, and the more he disregarded the word of God respecting the value and the use of it. And now that God, worn out with the increase of our pride and worldly-mindness, has put a check upon the increase of our wealth, murmuring, repining, foreboding is heard from house to house, not because almost all of us have not still a great deal more than is necessary, perhaps more than is good for us, but because our habits and desires have almost universally exceeded the limits, which God in his goodness has designed to satisfy; and we cannot submit to see taken from us, what did not make us grateful or contented when we had it.

This is what is the matter with the Times; but it is not all. I have alluded to the great increase of knowledge and education. A great deal of this world's good has always seemed to impede men's way to heaven, and our Saviour said it did so. But knowledge, understanding, —these might be expected to lead us to the right use of life, and make "our Times" so far good; but it has not. Men have grown proud

upon their knowledge, as well as upon their wealth. The more light God gives them to walk by, the more they think they can walk without his guidance. As soon as they are enabled to think for themselves, they begin to arrange the wisdom of his designs; and the first use that has been made of the increased moral power which men by cultivation have obtained, is to rebel against the whole arrangements of Providence, to refuse submission to every ordinance of God and man, and proclaim their independence. These are the characteristics of "our Times" in general. We shall take occasion to apply them more particularly.

III.

WHAT HAVE WE TO DO WITH THE TIMES?

"We cannot mend them—we had better mind our own business." I have heard it so said, but I am of a different opinion; nay, if we rightly knew ourselves, and estimated the designs of God in suffering us to be, we should perceive that we have really no other business; and that every hour is lost in which we allow the times to pass unnoticed. "O ye hypocrites," said the gentle and forbearing Jesus, "ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Why does the mariner so intently watch every appearance in the clouds, every change in the atmosphere, and color in the horizon? Because he has a given voyage to perform, and he hopes to reach his end in a given time; but his doing so mainly depends upon the weather, and his own skill in taking advantage of it. If he loiters till the

tide is turned, or loses a favorable wind: if he is unprepared for the squall when it arises, or misses his compass in a haze, he may strand his vessel on a foreign shore, or sink it in the deep. And why does the farmer think and talk so much about the weather, and rise up early to look at his weather-glass? because there is a time to reap and a time to sow; a time to plough and a time to harrow; it can only be done in certain states of the weather, and if the proper season passes, it cannot be done at all. Well may he be watchful of opportunities, careful to catch every favorable moment. Does any body say the weather is no business of his? We are exactly in the same position with respect to the times in which we live. We have a distance to go, an end to attain, within a limited period. The particular circumstances under which we are to do it, constitute what are called the features or characters of our times, in Scripture language "the signs of the times." Favorable or adverse, dark or fair, it is in them and through them we must make our way; we know not what they will be to-morrow; we cannot wait for better, lest our time be out. Judge if we have much to do with it! if we have any need to trouble ourselves about it!

What an age of wisdom then it would seem we live in. Every body is occupied with this very thing. In castles and in cottages, in shops and ale-houses, in the very corners of the streets, every body is discussing the Times. No sailor ever consulted his log, no farmer his weather-glass, with half the interest with which we read the newspapers; or any other papers, true or false, that bear on the important subject. The poor man suspends the earning of his bread to read pamphlets on the state of the nation; and the rich man neglects going to church to devise plans for its reform. The severe reproach of our blessed Lord will surely not apply to England, in the reign of William the Fourth.

Whether, or by what means it may be in our power to amend the times, will be the subject of a future paper: my present object is to show how deeply we are interested in them; how vitally we may be affected by their changes, even fatally, if we disregard the signs: for the same wind that will bring the vessel home if directed rightly, will wreck it if steered amiss—yet no fault be in the wind. If we make shipwreck, the fault is not in the times. God places none of us in circumstances in which we cannot fulfil the purpose of our existence, and reach the end appointed us. He sends no

temptation but he sends therewith a method of escape, and requires nothing of us that he does not offer us grace and strength to perform. In few words, and vulgar ones; asking pardon of the wisdom and learning of the age, our business is to see "which way the wind blows," that we may get safely home: and whether we be the pilot with the lives of others in our care, or the sea-boy with nothing at venture but ourselves, this is what we have to do with the Times.

It is difficult, in general terms, to make a specific application of this truth, because every one's duties will differ with his different situation in society; but it is manifest, that if peculiar advantages and peculiar dangers attend mankind in different ages and countries of the world, a particular direction should be given to our endeavors to resist or take advantage of them. But let us not forget, that in this, the great use of time as a preparation for eternity, contrary to the dictates of generosity in other matters, the first thing to be done is "to take care of ourselves." The man who neglects the care of his own salvation to attend to the public welfare, or improve his neighborhood, or promote the interests of society, will not have the praise of generosity or benevolence from God:

for the Scripture gives no warrant for such self-sacrifice: it is for ourselves we are to seek first the kingdom of God. It is to this end, first, that all surrounding circumstances are to be made subservient, and in connection with it to be primarily contemplated. Next to this, the bearing of measures and events upon the spiritual interests of others, and the advantage that can be taken of them to promote it, should be our consideration. In saying this, I do not put aside the glory of God, because that upon earth is identified with the spiritual good of his people, and we can only promote it by advancing ourselves, and advancing others, in the way of his commandments. If these considerations were really first in our minds, I think it probable we should come to very different conclusions about the character of the times; and I am sure we should make a very different use of its peculiarities, be they good or bad. If what I have said in a former paper of those that mark the present day be true, they claim the attention of every individual amongst us, for they form at once immense responsibilities and appalling dangers. It is indeed, as it is so often called, a crisis! We are, perhaps, at the end of a prosperity by which we have been inflated and corrupted—at the beginning of an adversity by

which we may, if grown wiser, be humbled and reclaimed. We are at the end of darkness and ignorance, in which men departed from God through carelessness and indifference; at the beginning of an age of universal information, in which those who despise him will do it knowingly, and in defiance. Possibly, though still let us hope otherwise, we are at the end of his almighty patience, and about to abide the commencement of his vengeance. We must see to it, each one according to our separate position in society: I cannot make the application to individuals; but if it be true that all are separately concerned in marking the signs of the times, how peculiarly must they be so who take part in the education of children in the present day—to make use of the things that have taken place, and prepare them for those that seem likely to ensue.

Their first care under these circumstances, it appears to me, should be to study the bearings of providence, with a view to meet rather than counteract them.

When God is giving, is the time to teach our children how to use; when he is taking away—is the time to teach them how to do without. In an age of ignorance we have chiefly to supply the poor with knowledge suffi-

cient to direct their steps; but in an age like the present, when inquiry and information are so rife, our task is rather to give a right direction to that which is supplied so freely: if it was formerly to lead the blind, so now it is to set up way-marks for them that see; for it will be in vain to bid them shut their eyes that we may guide them. In those things, on the contrary, which respect the peculiar current of men's minds and opinions, at any given period, a counteracting influence in education is usually required; because run which way they will, their tendency is to err, if not restrained. It cannot be doubted that the current now is towards independence of opinion, insubordination of conduct, intellectual assumption, spiritual licentiousness, and insubmission to authority, divine and human.

IV.

HOW CAN WE MEND THE TIMES?

Not by complaining of them;—if that would do, we should have had a golden age in England long ago. If I were to decide what is the worst feature, the most fearful omen of the present day, I should say it is the universal spirit of complaint. Consider what it is. The times and seasons are with the Lord: by him kings reign: he setteth up one and putteth down another: he maketh poor and he maketh rich: rulers may err; and subjects may revolt; the measures of a government may be more or less wise: but nothing can defeat the purpose of the Most High. The nation or the individual whom he blesses must be blessed; they whom he blesses not must remain unblest for ever. The unwilling prophet's words are true of every people under heaven, as well as of the tribe of Israel, "How shall I bless whom God

has not blessed, or how shall I curse whom God has not cursed!" What does God himself say? "I gave them a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath!" And what was the occasion of his anger? Their complaints, their ingratitude. Is it likely he should be propitiated by ours? I appeal to all those who acknowledge the sovereignty of God:—in Great Britain, they are a very large number: a larger proportion of the population than would have saved the cities of the plains; and larger, perhaps, than did save Nineveh from foretold destruction, but not by complaints and gloomy anticipations. God has many reasons for being angry with this nation: but worst of all for its unthankfulness. We have been prospered and protected more than any people; during fifty years of disorder and bloodshed, we have dwelt in peace, each under our own vine and our own fig-tree. Fifty years! nay, it is many hundred since an enemy has reaped our fields, or lighted a fire upon our hearths. In spiritual things, mean time, our advantages have been so great, compared with other churches, that we may almost be said, like Israel in Egypt, to have had light in our dwellings while darkness was in all the land. What acknowledgments have been made of this, He

who has received them only knows; our thanks are reserved for His private ear, while our complainings are resounded through the country—but this ought not to be. God is offended and men are misled by it. What are the ignorant and irreligious to know of our grateful admiration of God's government, if they hear nothing from us but their own dissatisfied language? What are our servants to know, if as soon as we have said grace for the food upon our tables, they hear impatient murmuring about its price; that it sells for too little or costs too much; that we cannot have all we used to have, or may soon be deprived of what we have? What are our children to know, if while we teach them that God is ruler over all, they learn from our conversation that all is going wrong? It has always been construed high treason to speak against a king, or use any language calculated to bring a government into contempt, because to do so, is to stimulate others to revolt and disaffection. Have not our complaints about the times the same tendency, of inciting to rebellion against the King of kings? If we would mend them, I should say that one thing to be done is to cease to offend God by complaining of them.

But we must not deceive ourselves: he who

is not contented, cannot be grateful. If we are disquieted that God has taken from us twenty acres, we are not thankful that he has left us ten; if we covet a palace, we are not grateful for a cottage. It is an anomaly with which we may delude ourselves, but not God: and there is great need that as well as ceasing to complain of the Times, we learn to be contented with them: I am sure there is no more likely way to mend them. Fancy for a moment the whole people of England obeying the Scripture precept—"Be content with such things as ye have." Would not the strife, the peculation, the oppression cease; the privation be without restlessness, and the disappointment without a sting? What happy days, in which all men could be content with much or little, with gain or loss! We cannot effect this as a whole; but we can each do something towards it; every additional contented one among her people, will make England a happier nation, and so far amend the Times. And to this point I would particularly call the attention of those who take any part in education—especially the education of the people. Teach them contentedness. It has not been our way to do so. We have taught our children to be emulous, to be am-

bitious, to be aspiring; we have stimulated them with prospects of advancement, and made them ashamed of inferiority; and our example has proved to them the sincerity of our precepts. We should take advantage of the change in the current of affairs, to alter the course of our influence and instructions; that while losing instead of gaining, sinking instead of rising, is the character of the day, the value of what remains, and the advantages that are continued, may become the predominant subject of calculation.

Another method to amend the Times, is, by removing the cause of our evils. I do not mean removing ministers, or dethroning kings—this remedy has been tried from the beginning of the world, and has been eminently unsuccessful, since things go on worse than ever—so it is said. Whoever be the instrument, the cause of national evil is the anger of God: we need but read the Bible history to be fully assured of this. The people sinned, and God allowed their rulers to do wrong: and then he visited the wrong upon the people. Whether our rulers act wisely or otherwise, we are not always so good judges as we think ourselves; but a mistake on this point would be of no consequence, if whenever we thought them wrong,

we received it as a mark of God's displeasure and proceeded to consider how we had provoked his anger, and how best we might appease it. It would be encouraging to think when we heard Christians discussing the measures of government, that such were the conclusions at which they desired to come;—that if they discovered the measures to be good, they meant to thank God for his guidance and blessing; and if they determined them to be bad, they meant to deprecate his anger by repentance and prayer. Political unions, on such grounds, would be an excellent instrument to mend the Times: and without a union, something may be done. The sins of a nation are but the aggregate of the sins of individuals, and individual repentance would make a penitent nation: beside, we can ask pardon and grace for others as well as for ourselves; and the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

But all the things are secondary, affecting our temporal prosperity: we must refer to our first position, that times are only good or bad, in proportion as they serve the purpose for which all time is given: for which an interval has been made between the fall and the final judgment—the purpose of redemption, the op-

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portunity for repentance unto salvation. To make our days good, we have only to make them serve this end: if we are saved in them, they are good indeed to us: if many are saved in them, they are generally good: or if, while the saved are few, the opportunities and means are many, we have little excuse for complaining.

The best of all ways therefore to amend the Times, is, to make better use of them for our own salvation, and for promoting the salvation of others. And if we were right in a former paper, respecting the peculiar character of the present age, as distinguished from former ones, making in both better and worse, better in its opportunities, worse in their mis-use, there is much in particular for those to do who have the care of education: and much occasion for all who have it in their power to take that care upon them, for the good of the rising race. Humanly speaking, every thing depends upon it. Knowledge, understanding, is the characteristic of the day: the direction given to that knowledge, the correctness of that understanding, will stamp the character of our Times: they will soon be indeed the best or the worst that ever were. If knowledge can be made subservient to religion, they will be blessed in-

creasingly: if not, vain will be the help of man, for God will not help a people that knowingly reject Him, and choose to be independent of Him. Intellectual light has burst in upon us like a flood: prejudice, habit, influence, the restraints of the ignorant, are swept away; nothing but truth, divine truth and principle, can direct the torrent and render it innoxious. I own I apprehend less evil from these changes to our own Times, than to those of our children:—how very much under God, are theirs in the hands of those who are now teaching them!

THE END

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